

Origins of Great Ancient Civilizations

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Origins of Great Ancient Civilizations

Scope:

The early civilizations of the Near East during the Bronze Age (3500–1000 B.C.) and Early Iron Age (1100–500 B.C.) have been the preserve of archaeologists and linguists. Before the late 19th century, these civilizations were unknown, save for brief, often inaccurate biblical references. To modern readers, these civilizations are remote and forbidding, in contrast to Classical Greece and Rome. Yet each year, discoveries and scholarly publications have revealed the fundamental contributions of the ancient Near East to later Western civilization. Therefore, this course presents the main achievements and contributions of these early civilizations from Sumer to Achaemenid Persia.

The first six lectures deal with the emergence of urban-based, literate civilizations in the Early and Middle Bronze Ages (c. 3500–1550 B.C.). Three such civilizations appeared in the river valleys of the Tigris–Euphrates, Nile, and Indus. All three owed much to earlier Neolithic villages, yet each represented a significant break in previous patterns of life. The Sumerians and Egyptians are known through their writings, whereas the glyphs used in the Indus valley are as yet undeciphered.

The next three lectures deal with the achievements and collapse of the Late Bronze Age (1550–1000 B.C.). In this period, civilization had expanded by trade and imperial wars far beyond the river valleys of Egypt and lower Mesopotamia (Iraq). The pharaohs of Dynasty XVIII and XIX forged a great empire in the Levant, but they succeeded because other peoples—Canaanites, Hurrians, and Hittites—had long adapted Mesopotamian civilization. Great bureaucratic states emerged, foremost the Egyptian and Hittite Empires, as well as the kingdoms of Assyria and Babylonia. The Aegean world, future home to Classical Hellenic civilization, was also part of this wider political and cultural order, although the order collapsed in the two centuries following 1200 B.C.—a period often compared to the Dark Ages following the collapse of imperial Rome.

The last three lectures deal with the achievements of the empires and states of the Early Iron Age. Assyrians, Babylonians, and Persians, in turn, built more effective imperial orders and reinterpreted Near Eastern cultural traditions. Phoenicians and Aramaeans revived trade, on sea and land, respectively, and promoted alphabetic writing, while the Hebrews defined the religious and ethical future of Western civilization. The reign of Darius I (521–486 B.C.), Great King of Persia, represented the climax to 35 centuries of Near Eastern history, for he ruled the most successful empire to date, stretching from the shores of the Aegean Sea to the Indus Valley. Yet Darius I also marked a turning point, when he and his empire were drawn into a conflict with distant Greeks, who had evolved along quite different lines since the end of the Late Bronze Age.

Lecture One

Cradles of Civilization

Scope: In circa 3500–3000 B.C., the earliest civilizations in the river valleys of the Tigris–Euphrates, Nile, and Indus emerged from Neolithic villages, which in turn, rested on achievements in domesticating plants and animals and improving material culture over the previous eight centuries. The flood plains of the three rivers allowed for intensive cultivation of grains necessary to sustain cities. Greater organization was required to build canals and irrigation systems to regulate the rivers. In the Fertile Crescent, ancestors of the Sumerians concentrated in lower Mesopotamia (Iraq), where they built early cities by the time of the Uruk Period (c. 3500–3100 B.C.). Long-distance trade sustained economic growth and spread urban-based civilization and literacy. Egypt witnessed a similar shift from Neolithic village to literate civilization, but the ease of communication offered by the Nile resulted in regional states rather than cities, which coalesced into the two kingdoms of Lower and Upper Egypt. In 3100 B.C., King Narmer of Upper Egypt conquered the southern region and forged the world’s first kingdom. In the Indus valley, probably the land known as Meluhha in Sumerian texts, archaeology has revealed a similar urban-based civilization centered at the sites of Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa, but details of these cities are obscure given the absence of literary records.

Outline

- I. This course focuses primarily on the origins, evolution, and achievements of the great ancient civilizations located between the Nile and the Indus Rivers, that is, the region known today as the Middle East.
 - A. How are these civilizations, so remote in the minds of most people, important to us today? The answer is that they act as the cultural basis for many of the civilizations that emerged later on the Eurasian landmass and have come to dictate the destinies of many in our world.
 - B. Mesopotamia (Greek: “land between the rivers”) is the ancient name for Iraq and is the earliest known civilization. This civilization, perhaps more than any other, established the foundations for future civilizations.
 - C. The civilizations we shall examine invite comparisons to other early civilizations, such as those in China and India, the Megalithic civilizations of Western Europe, and the civilizations of the Americas.
 - D. Finally, it is important to understand the origins of the great traditions that come out of the Near East (known to us as the Middle East), because they stand behind the traditions of Classical Greece.
- II. We begin by looking at the cradles of these early civilizations—the three river systems of the Tigris–Euphrates, the Nile, and the Indus.
 - A. The Tigris–Euphrates river system rises in the mountain ranges of eastern Turkey and runs through Iraq, flowing into the Persian Gulf.
 - B. The Nile arises from sources in east Africa and, from the First Cataract (a set of falls and rapids), serves to divide Egypt in the north from what is now Sudan in the south.
 - C. The Indus river system was the cradle of later Indian civilization, but this civilization was only discovered in the 1920s and is still largely unknown to us.
- III. The literate, urban civilizations that first emerged in Mesopotamia (southern Iraq), including Sumer, rested on achievements of people of the Neolithic Age (“New Stone Age”) (c. 7000–5000 B.C.).
 - A. Archaeologists and anthropologists working in Israel and eastern Turkey have been able to detect the domestication of plants and animals between 11,000 and 6000 B.C. This is the first step in the development of settled communities.
 - B. By 6000 B.C., Neolithic villages emerged in the area that became known as the Fertile Crescent, that is, the region encompassing the modern countries of Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Israel, and Lebanon. These villages were also found deep in Asia Minor, or Anatolia.
 1. Such villages comprised hundreds of people living in permanent dwellings constructed of stone, mud brick, or wood.

2. The shift from hunting and food-gathering to agriculture and stock-raising allowed the support of denser populations.
 3. Work was done in ceramics, and copper and tin were soon smelted.
- C. Archaeologists have studied several impressive Neolithic villages.
1. For example, Jericho, the famous biblical site, shows continuous occupation stretching back to 6000 B.C., with increasing sophistication in architecture, specialization in labor, and further domestication of plants and animals.
 2. Çatal Hüyük was another important settlement, on the Konya plain in south-central Turkey. Finds from this site have been exhibited at the Museum of Anatolian Civilizations in Ankara, including the famous “bull room” and figurines of a great mother goddess.
- D. Note, however, that these Neolithic villages were not located in the river valleys. Instead, Jericho and Çatal Hüyük, along with Jarmo and Tell Halaf in northern Iraq, were all located in regions where the soil could be easily worked with relatively primitive hand tools. Thus, the available technology limited the size of these villages.
- IV. The inevitable pressures of rising population, coupled with technological improvements, led to an important change, documented circa 4500 B.C.; this change was a shift of populations into the river valleys, particularly into lower Mesopotamia.
- A. The movement was brought on by several breakthroughs, including the creation of improved tools and plows and the domestication of oxen. By 3500 B.C., plows were pulled by two to eight oxen, as evidenced by an early pictogram of an ox plow.
- B. Populations moved into lower Iraq and began to clear the dense undergrowth of the delta. This period, known as the al-Ubaid Period (c. 4500–3500 B.C.), was marked by larger settlements, intensive agriculture, and increasing concentrations of population.
- C. The Tigris and Euphrates were not easy rivers to tame.
1. Neolithic settlers in these regions had to drain the marshes and channel the river systems into irrigated fields, which required a good deal of experimentation and social organization.
 2. Further, both rivers are difficult to navigate; the Euphrates is slow and sluggish and has been known to change its course frequently, with disastrous results. The Tigris, in contrast, is swift and could not be navigated efficiently until the advent of steam power. Both rivers are subject to repeated, violent, and unpredictable flooding.
 3. Nonetheless, by 3500 B.C., the landscape of lower Iraq was beginning to acquire its current appearance, with regulated fields crossed by dikes, ditches, and canals.
- D. Developments in technology and agriculture produced cities in Mesopotamia by 3500 B.C. The end of the al-Ubaid Period is dated to the time that Uruk, home of the legendary figure Gilgamesh, consolidated into a city, marking the start of what is known as the Uruk Period (c. 3500–3100 B.C.).
1. Cities of the Uruk Period had populations of 10,000–20,000. By 2900 B.C., Uruk in its area was half the size of imperial Rome.
 2. These cities would have to be sustained by agriculture and the development of trade, which would eventually lead to writing.
- V. At the same time that true cities emerged in Mesopotamia (c. 3500–3100 B.C.), similar developments were taking place in the regions of two other river systems, the Nile and the Indus.
- A. Agriculture and urban-based civilization appeared slightly later in the Nile region than they had in Sumer.
1. Until 6000–5000 B.C., farming in the Nile region was impossible. The Sahara Desert did not dry up and assume its current guise until about 5000 B.C.; with the drying of the desert, the Nile was pushed to its current course, and farming became possible.
 2. The Nile was, however, a much easier river system to tame than the Euphrates or the Tigris. The Nile is predictable, flooding at regular intervals and depositing thick, rich soil along its banks, which gave farmers a yield of three harvests a year.
 3. Goats, cattle, wheat, and barley arrived in the Nile valley as Levantine imports sometime after 5000 B.C., resulting in the rapid emergence of Neolithic-style villages in Egypt.

4. These villages did not evolve into the city pattern seen in Sumer. In Egypt, this is known as the Gerzean Period (c. 3500–3100 B.C.). What will drive Egyptian civilization is the unification of Egypt under Narmer in 3100 B.C.
- B. The Indus valley shows similar patterns to the Nile valley. True cities emerged in this region perhaps 900 or 1,000 years later than in Sumer, probably around 2600 B.C.
1. Sites in this area have been excavated only since the 1920s. We shall probably never be able to read the available samples of writing, but we believe the Sumerians knew this land as Meluhha.
 2. We see many of the same features in the Indus valley that we saw in both Mesopotamia and Egypt, that is, a period of Neolithic villages, starting from about 6000 B.C., with the same basic crops and animals, followed by relocation of the populations into the river valleys by about 2600–2500 B.C.
 3. We know of two major sites of the later Indus valley civilization, Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa, both in Pakistan today. Both were clearly complex cities resting on the same type of agriculture and canal and dike systems seen in Mesopotamia.
 4. By 1700 B.C., these cities were abandoned. About 700 years later, new cities emerged, at which point, the axis of Indian civilization had shifted from the Indus to the Ganges.

VI. In the next lecture, we shall launch our study with Mesopotamia and Sumer, where the key to civilization was developed—writing.

Further Reading:

R. Adams, and H. R. Nissen, *The Uruk Countryside*.

J. M. Kenoyer, *Ancient Cities of the Indus Valley Civilization*.

H. W. F. Saggs, *Civilization before Greece and Rome*.

Questions to Consider:

1. What were the achievements of Neolithic villages that made possible the birth of civilization in the Tigris–Euphrates, Nile, and Indus valleys in circa 3500–2600 B.C.? Why did urban, literate civilization appear first in Sumer?
2. In what ways did developments in Egypt and the Indus valley parallel or differ from the pattern seen in Sumer during the Uruk Period?

Lecture Two

First Cities of Sumer

Scope: Cuneiform tablets from 2800 B.C. on illuminate the economic, social, and religious life of the first Sumerian cities. The Sumerians are also revealed as the progenitors of the urban civilization of the ancient Near East based on writing and long-distance trade. Sumerian merchants and immigrants carried their writing, material culture, and aesthetics to Elam and Akkad, to northern Mesopotamia and the Levant, and even to the Egyptian Delta. Cuneiform ultimately inspired diverse writing systems across Eurasia. Sumerians spoke an agglutinative language (without any known relative), from which pictograms were readily adapted to represent either phonograms or ideograms. By 2600 B.C., cuneiform had been developed to express every grammatical nuance of spoken Sumerian and, thus, made possible government and literature. Furthermore, cuneiform was adapted to the unrelated languages Akkadian and Elamite. Writing had been invented to facilitate commerce and exchange within early Sumerian cities. Long-distance trade fed Sumer with laborers, building materials, and luxuries vital for urban life, and exports of Sumerian manufactured goods stimulated economic growth across the Near East.

Outline

- I. In this lecture, we shall look at the first cities of Sumer, which emerged in southern Iraq, or Mesopotamia.
 - A. In the last lecture, we discussed the intensive agriculture needed to support large populations in emerging cities. Here, we'll examine two other components necessary for urban civilized life: trade and writing.
 - B. This lecture will cover three periods of early Mesopotamian history, the first of which is the Uruk Period (c. 3500–3100 B.C.). This period saw villages evolve into cities quite rapidly. Uruk itself was home to the legendary figure Gilgamesh; another well-known city was the biblical Ur, probably the largest city of Sumer in the Uruk Period.
 - C. The other two periods that we shall look at in this lecture are the Proto-Literate Period (c. 3100–2800 B.C.) and the Early Dynastic Period (c. 2800–2300 B.C.). The principal political organization during all this time was the city-state.
- II. How did conditions in Sumer in the late Uruk Period lead to the development of long-distance trade and writing?
 - A. The cities of Sumer were of considerable size compared to previous concentrations of populations. The whole of Sumer, which was approximately the size of Connecticut, may have attained a population of 500,000 or more. The population of Uruk in the time of Gilgamesh (c. 2700–2650 B.C.) has been estimated at 20,000 residents.
 - B. There were at least 20 major city-states in Sumer and a number of lesser towns. Major city-states included Nippur in central Sumer, which was seen as the most sacred city of the land.
 - C. The Sumerians thought of themselves as a single people—they referred to themselves as the “black-haired people”—but they were loyal to the individual city-states and the divinities associated with cities.
 - D. The temple stood at the heart of each city. Some scholars have argued that the development of the conditions that led to the rise of cities was driven by the need to pay rents and dues owed to the great temples.
 1. This development can be traced in the city of Eridu, where archaeology shows the evolution of the temple from a simple complex to an enormous ziggurat.
 2. Such temples generated significant amounts of business and covered vast parts of the city; indeed, some of the larger temples may be thought of as a city within a city.
 3. The temples held vast storage areas for grains and other goods, and scribes were required to keep inventory of the goods. Specialized occupations emerged, including potters and metalworkers.
 4. In effect, the temples were the primary engines fueling economic growth in Sumerian cities.
 - E. Sumerian cities lacked, however, materials that could be used for building; hardwoods, metal, and stone had to be imported, as did more exotic goods. Such goods could only be obtained by developing trade

routes into western Iran or to the north, up the Tigris and Euphrates and into Syria and Asia Minor. Even in the Uruk Period, trade routes linked the cities of Sumer with these other areas.

1. Manufactured goods, such as bread, date wine, textiles, furniture, weapons, jewelry, and ceramics, flowed out of Sumer into Syria, Asia Minor, and Iran, stimulating development in Neolithic villages in those regions and promoting the adoption of the urban-based civilization found in Sumer.
 2. In return, cities in Sumer brought in raw materials to be used in building and manufacturing, along with population in the form of slaves and immigrants.
 3. Thus, from the start, cities in Sumer were sustained by long-distance trade, and as a result, Mesopotamian civilization spread out across the Near East.
- F. The Sumerians were remarkable merchants, and some of them appeared in Egypt quite early. We have evidence of a Sumerian community in the western Delta of Egypt, and Sumerian settlements are also documented quite far up the Tigris, into Syria.
- G. Merchant convoys demanded organization, which came from the temples. Each of the great temples in a Sumerian city-state was run by a group of priests, among whom was a figure known as an *en* (“overseer”). The *en* managed the economic and administrative side of the temple, as opposed to the ritual and religious side.
1. The merchants were organized into private partnerships, known as *karum*, directed by the temple and the dominant priestly families.
 2. These were large-scale trading concessions backed by the investments of the temple and the city-state.
- III. Long-distance trade and the concentration of surplus goods in Sumerian cities created the conditions for the invention of writing.
- A. A full-fledged writing system must be able to express every nuance of the spoken language. This level was probably not attained in Sumer until about 2800 B.C.
- B. Economic development drove the need to invent writing.
- C. Sumerian was well-suited for the transition from spoken to written language. It is an agglutinative language, meaning a “stuck-together” language. The grammar and syntax of Sumerian were indicated by adding prefixes and suffixes to root words.
- D. Since Sumerian was the first language to be committed to writing, it became the religious language of urban-based civilization in Mesopotamia and was adopted as a literary and religious language by later peoples who came to rule over the area.
- E. Writing was done with a stylus in wet clay. As a result, the shapes of the characters tended to be in the form of a wedge. When Sumerian writing was first discovered in the 19th century, it was called *cuneiform*, which means “wedge-shaped.”
- F. In keeping inventories, scribes first recorded small icons, such as pictures of cattle, along with tally marks using the base-10 system.
1. Sumerian was a largely monosyllabic language and was rich in homonyms and homophones. This structure enabled a pictogram to be used to represent a single sound (*phonogram*) or, later, a single object or idea (*ideogram*).
 2. For example, a word such as *ti*, meaning “bow,” could be used to represent the sound *ti*, which was also the verb “to live.” What was originally a picture could be applied to represent a sound.
 3. This concept could be extended to allow a pictogram to represent an idea. In English, a pictogram for *Sun* might be extended to express the homonym *son*, then to an ideogram for *day*.
 4. We have a number of interesting examples of pictograms used to express sounds or groups of sounds that come from a rich record of tablets, starting from around 3300 B.C.
 5. By the end of the Uruk Period, there were at least 2,000 well-known symbols used by all Sumerian scribes to represent a basic group of pictograms, phonograms, and ideograms. This was not yet true writing, however; the system did not allow the expression of complicated sentences, tense, or mood.
- G. The written Sumerian language was also used by the Akkadians to the north and the Elamites to the east. Therefore scribes felt the need to differentiate the meanings of their symbols, and the result was the use of *determinatives*. These were additions and modifications to the symbols to indicate their parts of speech, that is, whether the pictogram indicated the noun *ti* or the verb *ti*.

- H. Other developments also assisted the evolution of writing. For example, the writing materials used promoted the tendency to turn symbols into abstract representations. In this way, the head of a bull might quickly become nothing more than a triangular shape.
- I. Some scholars argue that the concept of writing was brought to Egypt by Sumerian merchants in the late Uruk Period. The indecipherable glyphs of the Indus valley that appear around 2500 B.C. seem also to be based on Sumerian script.
 - 1. In turn, Sumerian script became the basis for various syllabaries, that is, simplified writing systems that express syllables, appearing around 1900 B.C. in northern Syria.
 - 2. In the Early Iron Age (1100–500 B.C.), these syllabaries were further simplified by the Phoenicians into an alphabet representing consonants. That alphabet, with the addition of vowels, was adopted by the Greeks.
 - 3. What is used in the West today is a slightly Roman modification of that Greek alphabet that can be traced back to the Sumerians' cuneiform script.

Further Reading:

Samuel Noah Kramer, *History Begins at Sumer*.

H. R. Nissen, *The Early History of the Ancient Near East, 9000–3000 B.C.* Translated by E. Lutzeyer and K. Northcott.

Questions to Consider:

- 1. Why was long-distance trade so important for sustaining the cities of Sumer? What were the products exchanged? How was trade organized? How did this trade transform both the cities of Mesopotamia and their trading partners in Syria, Anatolia, and Iran?
- 2. Why did Sumerian temples emerge as the prime markets and centers of production in the Uruk Period? What were the social and economic consequences? How did this fact dictate the invention and use of writing?

Lecture Three

Mesopotamian Kings and Scribes

Scope: The Sumerians, although united in language and culture, were divided politically. City-states clashed over border lands and trade routes and battled Akkadians to the north and Elamites to the east. In this era of warring states (c. 3000–2350 B.C.), *ensi* (dynasts) drilled armies and employed scribes. Those *ensi* who imposed their hegemony over rivals assumed the honorific *lugal*, “great man.” *Lugals* and *ensi* cloaked themselves in religious symbols, as seen in the royal burials at Ur of about 2900–2800 B.C. Wars made the kingship but also undermined dynasties, as seen in the costly clash of Lagash under the family of Eannatum against Umma. In 2340 B.C., Sargon, king of the Akkadians, conquered Sumer and forged the first territorial empire embracing Mesopotamia. His grandson, Naram-sin, carried Akkadian arms into Anatolia. Akkadian emperors had insufficient royal servants to rule their wide-flung empire and faced the hostility of Sumerian cities. The Akkadian Empire fragmented in 2200 B.C., but Ur-nammu, king of Ur, constructed his own territorial empire a century later. Ur-nammu issued a law code and sponsored vast building programs; his son, Shulgi, developed royal administration. This Neo-Sumerian Empire, too, fragmented by 2000 B.C., but two centuries later, an Amorite prince of Babylon, Hammurabi (r. 1792–1750 B.C.), forged the third Mesopotamian Empire.

Outline

- I. In the course of the development of city-states in Sumer, between about 3500 and 3000 B.C., all the arable and marginal land was taken; eventually, the borders of the city-states began to run up against each other. The result was border wars and battles over important trade routes.
 - A. Cuneiform tablets from around 2900–2800 B.C. inform us of the political situation in Sumer, revealing long and bitter memories of border wars among the city-states.
 - B. A number of city-states were in existence, including Ur, probably the largest city in Sumer; Larsa; and Eridu—all on the southern shores of the Persian Gulf.
 - C. Central Sumer also had a number of cities, including Uruk and Nippur, along with Lagash and Umma, rivals that vied for control of trade routes into the east.
 - D. To the north were Barsippa and Kish, probably representing the limits of Sumerian civilization. Kish was regarded as a seat of power in Sumer, and any ruler who could impose his control that far north essentially controlled the land of Sumer.
 - E. Both tablets and archaeology indicate that the political world of Sumer was larger than just the Sumerian city-states.
 1. Excavations in northern Syria, for example, have revealed the city of Ebla, which had adopted the full urban, literate civilization of Sumer by 2600 B.C.
 2. On the middle Euphrates was the city of Mari, and immediately to the north of the Sumerian city-states, between the valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates, were the Akkadians. These were a Semitic-speaking people who had adopted the urban institutions of Sumer and practiced similar religious rituals.
 3. To the east was the area of Elam, in what is now southwestern Iran. Its primary cities were Anshan and Susa. Elamites were regarded as the most dangerous of Sumer’s immediate neighbors.
 4. To the far north, on the upper Tigris, the future land of Assyria had also adopted urban-based civilization in Ashur and Nineveh.
- II. Scholars are mostly in the dark about the political organization of these city-states, although a number of theories have been proposed.
 - A. In general, the sources seem to indicate that the city-states were theocracies, run by a group of powerful families that controlled the cults. At least one member of the group held the title *en* (“overseer”).
 - B. From about 2900 B.C., as the city-states began to clash, the need arose to organize soldiers and scribes. At about this time, we begin to encounter in the records men who could claim the early dynastic title *ensi* or

ensi-gar. An *ensi* who could impose his hegemony over neighboring *ensi* could claim the title *lugal*, “great man.”

- C. Aspiring kings emerged quickly in early wars among city-states because they had the ability to mobilize soldiers and resources. We have indications of this situation in artwork.
 - 1. The Standard of Ur (c. 2550 B.C.), for example, is a lapis lazuli stone decorated with shells, showing scenes of peace and war.
 - 2. Another relief, known as the Stele of Vultures (c. 2450 B.C.), was erected by Eannatum, the *ensi* of Lagash.
 - 3. Both of these depictions show highly disciplined phalanx, and already, chariots can be seen on the battlefield, although they were rather clumsy carts drawn by mules or donkeys.
 - D. *Ensi* could also draw on scribes to cloak themselves with symbols of legitimacy. This was born out by the excavations of Ur conducted in the 1920s–1930s by Sir Leonard Woolley. Grave goods from about 2600 B.C. indicate that these early *lugals* of Ur, often called the First Dynasty of Ur, were seen as figures close to the gods.
- III. We also have some excellent documentation from Girsu, a satellite town of Lagash, recording the battles between Lagash and the rival city of Umma.
- A. The first indication we have of the ancient struggle between these two cities comes from the reign of Eannatum (c. 2450 B.C.). Annals record fighting for the border zone between Eannatum and the *ensi* of Umma. As the victor, Eannatum exacted from Umma acknowledgment as a *lugal*, but there was no effort to annex Umma to build a larger state.
 - B. Such battles probably raged over the landscape of Sumer, resulting in only minor political changes. None of the city-states had the vision or the institutions required to create a wider political order.
 - C. Thus, Eannatum’s grandson or nephew, Entemena (c. 2400 B.C.), repeated the whole process a generation later. Entemena was then followed by his son, Urukagina (c. 2350 B.C.), who had the same problems with Umma. Records indicate that Urukagina had to institute various reforms to restore order in his city-state. He, in turn, was overthrown by his rival in Umma, Lugalzagesi (r. c. 2340–2316 B.C.).
 - D. Lugalzagesi fell to Sargon of Akkad (r. 2334–2279 B.C.), the former cup-bearer of the king of Kish, who had assassinated his master.
- IV. Sargon the Great seized power in Kish, recruited an army of Akkadians, and conquered the cities of Sumer. Once he had Sumer under control, he waged campaigns from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean.
- A. Sargon amassed an empire stretching well over 1,000 miles. His grandson, Naram-sin (r. 2254–2218 B.C.), waged wars even farther afield, penetrating into what is now central Turkey, Iran, and Syria.
 - B. These kings of the Akkadian Empire marked a departure in Mesopotamian history. Beginning with Sargon, a great territorial empire was forged, and the two pillars of Near Eastern monarchies, a royal army and a royal professional bureaucracy, were put in place.
- V. The Akkadian Empire lasted for only about a century.
- A. The Akkadians never won over the loyalty of the Sumerians, and by about 2200 B.C., the empire became fragmented. The coup de grace was delivered by Iranian tribesmen known as Gutians, who entered and sacked Agade, the capital of Akkad.
 - B. Nonetheless, the Akkadians had proved what could be done, and by about 2100 B.C., a Sumerian ruler, Ur-nammu (r. 2112–2095 B.C.), the *lugal* of Ur, re-created the imperial state.
 - C. Ur-nammu and his son, Shulgi (r. 2094–2047 B.C.), carried out additional reforms in the evolution of an effective Near Eastern monarchy.
 - 1. Ur-nammu issued the first comprehensive law code, intended for use in Sumer, Akkad, and Elam.
 - 2. Shulgi was responsible for developing the beautiful chancery script of cuneiform tablets and perfecting Sumerian cuneiform into a precise legal and administrative language.
 - 3. Shulgi also sponsored a literary revival; during his reign, many of the ancient Sumerian myths and traditions were recorded.

- D. This empire, sometimes known as the Third Dynasty of Ur, or the Neo-Sumerian Empire, itself lasted only about a century before it fragmented. By 2006 B.C., the Elamites had invaded and sacked Ur, carrying off the city's sacred gods.
- E. Just as the Akkadians had, the Sumerians faced the problem of border control. Royal authority could be exercised only in the core southern regions of the empire. In the middle and upper areas of Mesopotamia, the outlying areas of Syria, or the border lands along Iran, royal authority depended on making alliances with local rulers.
- F. The Amorites (or Amurru) were West Semitic speakers living in what is now eastern Syria and along the middle Euphrates. Between 2000–1800 B.C., they migrated into Mesopotamia as tribal communities and seized power in a number of cities.
 - 1. The Amorites established regional kingdoms and adopted Akkadian as their administrative language.
 - 2. This migration of Semitic speakers had a major linguistic and ethnic impact in southern Mesopotamia. By 1800 B.C., Sumerian was lost as a spoken language, and the Sumerians were assimilated into a larger Semitic-speaking population; however, Sumerian institutions and culture held on.
 - 3. One of these Amorite princes, Hammurabi (r. 1792–1750 B.C.), emerged as the leading figure in southern Mesopotamia and built a great empire centered at Babylon. With him, the institutions that had been developed over the last seven centuries reached perfection.

Further Reading:

Henri Frankfort et al., eds., *The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man: An Essay on Speculative Thought in the Ancient Near East*. Rev. ed.

H. W. F. Saggs, *The Greatness That Was Babylon*.

Questions to Consider:

1. How did inter-city and frontier wars transform the government and society of Sumerian cities in 2800–2400 B.C.? What accounted for the success of *ensi* in founding dynasties? How powerful were the *ensi* and *lugals* of Sumer? How important were religious symbols in sanctifying royal rule?
2. How did the Akkadian emperors Sargon and Naram-sin change the political and cultural destinies of Mesopotamia? What were the crucial institutions they forged? What accounted for the collapse of the Akkadian Empire?

Lecture Four

Hammurabi's Babylon

Scope: Hammurabi (r. 1792–1750 B.C.) ruled over the most successful bureaucratic state of early Mesopotamia. The vigilant ruler is revealed in his correspondence with his governors at Mari, on the middle Euphrates, as well as in his law code, in vernacular Akkadian, which has survived intact. To be sure, Hammurabi followed Sumerian tradition and his code was a compilation of customary laws, yet royal judges were expected to apply the laws throughout the empire, and Hammurabi linked the throne with the administration of justice. Simultaneously, Hammurabi and his successors patronized arts, letters, and scholarship. Akkadian was transformed into a literary language. Sumerian myths and legends were reworked into literary epics, including the Enuma Elish, the creation epic; a long epic on the flood featuring Atrahasis as the Babylonian Noah; and a version of the Epic of Gilgamesh. Babylonian scholars also achieved impressive breakthroughs in mathematics and astronomy. Babylon remained the cultural center of the Near East down to the Roman age, but Hammurabi's heirs failed to keep pace with innovations in warfare. In about 1595 B.C., King Mursiliš and the Hittite chariots surprised and sacked Babylon. By 1540 B.C., Kassites seized Babylon and ruled as a warrior caste down to 1157 B.C. Kassite Babylon was a lesser regional kingdom, but the city of Babylon remained the cosmopolitan cultural center, and Akkadian was the language of diplomacy, culture, and scholarship in the Late Bronze Age.

Outline

- I. This lecture concludes our survey of Mesopotamian civilization in the Bronze Age, focusing on the career of Hammurabi (r. 1792–1750 B.C.).
 - A. We began by looking at the emergence of cities in Sumer (c. 3500 B.C.), and we are tracing the evolution of this civilization through the Sumerians, Akkadians, and Babylonians; later on in the course, we'll bring in the Assyrians, who carried this civilization down to about 1200–1000 B.C. and the collapse of the Bronze Age.
 - B. Hammurabi's Babylon falls in the period of the Middle Bronze Age and is seen, in many ways, as the pinnacle of Mesopotamian civilization.
- II. Recall that Hammurabi spent the 40 years of his reign bringing other regional states under his control.
 - A. In some ways, Hammurabi inherited a number of advantages from his predecessors, both the Neo-Sumerian kings and the Akkadian emperors. For example, a service aristocracy was already in place, as were the traditions of an effective army and military discipline.
 - B. Hammurabi profited from the fact that the course of the Euphrates shifted during the period of the Amorite migration (2000–1800 B.C.). This change of course favored Babylon, which emerged as the critical city on the lower Euphrates and the nexus of important trade routes.
 - C. The ruler was also a skilled diplomat, who managed to isolate his opponents and conquer them individually. By 1770–1760 B.C., he ruled a territorial empire that stretched from the Persian Gulf almost to the Mediterranean.
 - D. Hammurabi displayed relentless and meticulous attention to detail. This quality has been revealed to us from records in a library in the city of Mari on the middle Euphrates.
 - E. Hammurabi trained a superb royal army, as well as a militia or reserve force. These forces were comprised of heavy infantry, backed up with bowmen or javelin-men. We have no evidence, however, that these armies were equipped with the light chariots that came to dominate warfare in the Late Bronze Age. Indeed, some scholars hold that Hammurabi's state was toppled by the Kassites circa 1540 B.C. in part because the Babylonians failed to keep pace with military technology.
- III. We know much about Hammurabi's state through two remarkable sets of documents, the first of which is his law code.
 - A. Hammurabi's code survives almost intact and consists of 282 laws. In examining these laws, we can get some sense of the sophistication of Babylonian civilization.

- B. The code rests on earlier legal precedents, including the law code issued by the Neo-Sumerian emperor Ur-ammu and one issued nearly a century later by an Amorite ruler named Lipith-Ishtar (r. 1934–1924 B.C.).
 - C. Hammurabi's code was issued in Akkadian, the vernacular language, while all previous codes had been issued in Sumerian.
 - D. Hammurabi's code is not comparable to Justinian's, but it does list customary Babylonian laws by categories. The laws include royal rulings on customary matters in both civil and criminal litigation, organized in such a way that judges could use the code to decide cases by analogy and to invent new laws.
 - E. The code links the monarchy with law and with justice coming from the gods. This feature is an ancient one in Mesopotamian civilization: The king is the shepherd of his people. This is in contrast to Egyptian civilization, in which the pharaoh is a living god.
 - 1. The law code of Hammurabi would be received by the other peoples of the Middle East, who would then create their own legal systems based on that code.
 - 2. The prologue to Hammurabi's law code makes a powerful statement about the intent of royal government, outlining how kings in the Near East came to see their position.
 - F. Most of the code involves civil law, not criminal law, which by itself indicates the code's sophistication.
 - 1. The rules of adoption, divorce, and inheritance were incredibly complicated, particularly those pertaining to women and their rights to administer property.
 - 2. The laws of contract were extensive, and many cases were adjudicated through compensation with silver bullion.
 - 3. There is also a considerable amount of legislation regarding slaves and how they were to be treated.
 - G. One principle at work in Babylonian criminal law was *lex talionis* ("the law of like punishment"); that is, any injury or death suffered by one family had to be repaid by the offending family with an equal loss.
- IV. The other documents that came out of Hammurabi's reign and those of his successors are literary epics, recast from traditional poems and stories of the Sumerians.
- A. The most famous of these is the Epic of Gilgamesh, but even before this, there was probably an independent epic of a flood going back very early in Mesopotamian literature. The Sumerian Noah was Ziusudra from the city of Shuruppak. He is befriended by the god Enki, who advises Ziusudra to build an ark.
 - B. This independent legend was crafted into a full literary epic probably about a generation after the death of Hammurabi. In this Akkadian epic, the Babylonian Noah is Atrahasis ("Surpassing in Wisdom"). This story assumes the form that we know from the later Epic of Gilgamesh.
 - C. The story of the flood became linked with the hero of Uruk, Gilgamesh, yet in the Babylonian version, it gains a legal and moral aspect that is not seen in the Sumerian tale.
 - 1. In the Sumerian legend, Gilgamesh is a wild hero of the early dynastic age. In the Babylonian epic, the story is about the responsibility of kingship. Gilgamesh is introduced as a king who does not operate as a shepherd of the people. As a result, the gods create an anti-hero, Enkidu, who is sent to test Gilgamesh.
 - 2. In the Sumerian epic, Enkidu was merely a servant of Gilgamesh, but in the Babylonian tradition, he is the equal of Gilgamesh. The two undergo various trials and perform great acts as heroes.
 - 3. In the process of performing their great deeds, Enkidu and Gilgamesh offend the goddess Ishtar. Eventually, the gods judge the two heroes and determine that Enkidu must die.
 - 4. Enkidu's death then becomes the motive for the second half of the epic, in which Gilgamesh searches for the meaning of life. His search brings him to the Noah figure from the Sumerian tradition, who is known in the Babylonian account as Utanapishtim ("I who found life"). Utanapishtim is the only human to attain immortality through his survival of the flood.
 - 5. Utanapishtim's retelling of the flood story is a brilliant literary technique, later used by Homer in the *Odyssey*. He tells Gilgamesh that there is no everlasting life for humans.
 - D. The Epic of Gilgamesh established Akkadian as the literary language of the Near East for centuries to come. Akkadian also served as the diplomatic language for the Middle East for the rest of the Bronze Age and well into the Iron Age.

- V. In addition to the legal and literary achievements of Hammurabi's reign, we are now discovering a wide range of other Babylonian scholarship.
- A. Remarkable achievements were made in astronomy and mathematics; indeed, one tablet seems to reveal that the Babylonians knew the Pythagorean Theorem. Babylonian mathematics was premised on a base-60 system, which we still use in reckoning time.
 - B. Hammurabi transformed Babylon into the cultural and intellectual center of the Near East. The traditions of administration, military organization, and royal power created by Hammurabi would last, essentially, down to the Ottoman sultanate of the 1920s.
 - C. Yet Hammurabi's empire failed to endure. In 1595 B.C., the Hittites of Asia Minor, under King Mursiliš I, sacked Babylon. This weakened the city and enabled its capture by the Kassites, who ruled as a military elite down to about 1157. Even under the Kassite kings, however, the cultural, administrative, and legal institutions of Hammurabi endured.

Further Reading:

A. George, trans. *The Epic of Gilgamesh*.

J. B. Pritchard, *The Ancient Near East: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures*. Vol. I.

Questions to Consider:

1. How effectively was the Babylonian Empire administered? Why did Hammurabi's monarchy set the standard for successive later empires? Why was Hammurabi's law code so important to later generations?
2. How impressive were Babylonian achievements in literature and scholarship? How did these achievements influence later intellectual developments?

Lecture Five

Egypt in the Pyramid Age

Scope: In about 3100 B.C. Narmer (Menes), king of Upper Egypt, conquered the lower kingdom; henceforth, sacral kings, later known as *pharaohs*, ruled over Egypt. Narmer and his successors ruled from a great court at Memphis, where regional lords, or *nomarchs*, sought royal patronage and acted as the king's agents in *nomes* and villages. The first pharaohs mobilized labor and resources to construct palaces, sanctuaries, and funerary complexes around the *mastaba*, or royal mortuary. Royal demands and patronage drove the Egyptians to leap from Neolithic villages to urban civilization in the early Archaic Period (c. 3100–2700 B.C.). Scribes adapted pictograms into hieroglyphic writing to facilitate royal recordkeeping. The pharaohs of Dynasties III and IV, during the Old Kingdom (c. 2700–2181 B.C.), presided over a mature civilization. Without need of officials or soldiers, the god-kings at Memphis mobilized national resources to build pyramids. The pyramid epitomized the power of the pharaoh, but the *nomarchs* gained power by furnishing the labor and materiel for pyramid construction. The later pharaohs of Dynasties V and VI had to contend with regional aristocrats who controlled leading sanctuaries. Royal pyramids declined in quality and size as *nomarchs* withdrew from Memphis and established their own courts and funerary complexes in their native *nomes*. With the death of Pepi II in about 2185 B.C., the pharaohs of Memphis lost control over the Nile valley for the next 150 years.

Outline

- I. This lecture looks at developments in Egypt in the Bronze Age, taking place at about the same time as those we have seen in Mesopotamian civilization.
 - A. First, we shall explore Egypt in the Early Dynastic, or Archaic, Period and the Old Kingdom (c. 3100–2181 B.C.). Much of our information for this period comes from Manetho, writing in Greek circa 280 B.C., who established a sequence for the dynasties.
 - B. Later lectures will deal with the Middle Kingdom and the New Kingdom of the Late Bronze Age.
- II. We shall begin with some of the basic features of early Egyptian civilization.
 - A. Conditions in the Nile valley were different from those in Mesopotamia. Crops and animals, such as cattle, sheep, barley, and wheat, were brought into the Nile valley from the Near East between 5000–4500 B.C., when movement across the Sinai was much easier.
 - B. As noted earlier, the Nile did not assume its current course until after the drying up of the Sahara, which took place between 8000–4500 B.C. Before the Nile acquired its current form, farming and habitation in the Nile valley were limited.
 - C. The pattern of development into intensive agriculture in the Nile valley paralleled what we know of that development in the regions of the Tigris and Euphrates. However, as noted, cultivation in Egypt in this period was much easier than it was in Mesopotamia.
 - D. The Nile also promoted unity of the Egyptian people, starting around 3100 B.C. and lasting down to Alexander the Great. The Nile was the basis for all directions and the Egyptians' understanding of the world.
 1. To the ancient Egyptians, to travel upstream was to go south and to travel downstream was to go north.
 2. Egyptian society was protected by deserts and could not easily be invaded. Egyptians had only limited contact with other civilizations, whose representatives arrived by sea from the north.
 3. Thus, the Egyptians quickly coalesced into a homogenous population speaking a single language.
- III. Up to 3100 B.C., Egyptian civilization consisted of sophisticated Neolithic villages that had formed into *nomes*, regional districts, ruled by *nomarchs*. Each *nome* had market towns and cult sites but no true cities. This situation changed dramatically when Narmer (probably Menes in Manetho's account) united Upper and Lower Egypt.
 - A. Narmer originally ruled in the southern regions of the Nile valley, called Upper Egypt; he conquered Lower Egypt, that is, the region of the Delta and the area around what is today Cairo. This unification is

celebrated on a ceremonial object called the Narmer Palette. Henceforth, all the land north of the first cataract of the Nile was constituted as a single kingdom.

- B. Narmer built the city of Memphis at the juncture of the two kingdoms, close to where modern Cairo is, and it became the political and religious capital of Egypt throughout most of antiquity.
 - C. The pharaohs of the First and Second Dynasties exercised power by establishing a great capital city that would attract the various *nomarchs* to royal service.
 - 1. Early Egyptian civilization centered on the god-king, seen in earliest history as the son of Horus, the falcon god. The pharaoh's destiny was to join the gods.
 - 2. The favor of the pharaoh enabled *nomarchs* to establish power in their districts. In this way, Egypt was ruled through personal connections, not bureaucratic organization, as in Mesopotamia.
 - 3. The pharaohs were the lynchpins of cultural development in Egypt. The development of royal centers and shrines was driven by the pharaoh's need to project his sacral power and gain the favor of the gods. In turn, this need fueled economic development, explaining why Egypt advanced so quickly to an urban stage.
 - D. Egypt also advanced quickly to a literate stage, although scholars still debate how hieroglyphics were invented.
 - 1. The system of writing in Egypt was different from Mesopotamian cuneiform; the signs represent consonantal clusters without vowels.
 - 2. Some scholars argue that the application of early pictograms to Egyptian writing was, again, driven by the pharaoh, who recognized the value of Sumerian writing.
- IV. The development of this early sacral monarchy reached its climax in the rulers of the Old Kingdom, particularly those of Dynasties III and IV. The greatest realization of this development was the pyramid.
- A. Most of the pyramids were constructed from 2600–2300 B.C. The first was built by a pharaoh of the Third Dynasty, Zoser, at Sakkara. Its structure consists of a succession of diminishing mastabas.
 - B. Within 40 years, the classic sheer-faced pyramids were constructed. Two of these were erected by Snefru of Dynasty IV at Dahshur.
 - C. Snefru's successors, Khufu, Khafre, and Menkaura, built the three Great Pyramids at Gizeh.
- V. The pyramid of Khufu sums up the achievements of the early Old Kingdom.
- A. By the time Khufu built his pyramid, he was regarded as a living god—Horus. Since the First Dynasty, all pharaohs had also been associated with Ptah, the god of wisdom and the patron god of Memphis.
 - B. The tomb served as the burial place of not only the pharaoh but also his family, attendants, and loyal *nomarchs*. The complex was surrounded by an enormous temenos wall that encircled the sacred area.
 - C. The Great Pyramid of Khufu is a testimony to royal power and the ability to mobilize labor and resources.
 - 1. This pyramid and others were built not by slaves but by peasants, conscripted during the six months of the year when the Nile flooded the valley and agriculture was impossible.
 - 2. Perhaps 100,000 men were put to work building the Great Pyramid during the flood season. The pyramid stood 480 feet high, and its base was a perfect square of 786 feet, covering nearly 13 acres.
 - 3. The laborers built the pyramid using mostly stone and copper tools. The quarries for the stone were in Upper Egypt, and the stone had to be floated down the Nile to Gizeh. Huge inclined planes of earth were built to move the blocks of stone up as the height of the pyramid rose; each block weighed an average of 2.5 tons.
 - D. The successors of Khufu, Khafre and Menkaura, also built pyramids, but these were considerably smaller. The pyramids represent the pinnacle of Egyptian civilization and the sacral power of the pharaoh, but they also probably resulted in the failure of the monarchy.
 - 1. To maintain the labor force and acquire the resources to build great pyramids meant that the pharaohs had to work through the *nomarchs*. By the end of the Fourth Dynasty and the beginning of the Fifth, however, these regional figures were starting to assert their own authority.
 - 2. The *nomarchs* gained power and privileges in their districts, and their positions became hereditary. They became increasingly independent from the court at Memphis.
 - 3. Further, the pharaohs of Dynasties V and VI felt a need to bolster their legitimacy, because they were not connected to Dynasty IV. They endowed temples and alienated property and royal rights to the

- priestly families. The cult of Ra, the Sun and creator god, eclipsed the powers of the kings, as can be seen in the construction of the great obelisks, symbolizing Ra's rays.
- E. Thus, the god-kings in Memphis lost power in the Nile valley. Unlike their contemporaries in Mesopotamia, these pharaohs had not developed the institutions necessary to impose their authority.
1. As Mesopotamia began to achieve unity under the Akkadian emperors, power in Egypt was divided among different *nomarchs*.
 2. The culmination of this process came in the Sixth Dynasty with the exceedingly long reign of Pepi II (2275–2185 B.C.). By the time of Pepi's death, the pharaohs in Memphis were no longer able to exercise authority over the Nile valley.
 3. For the next 150 years, Egypt was fragmented under the rule of independent *nomarchs*. Four regional powers ultimately emerged: in Memphis, in Upper Egypt at Edfu and Abydos, and in Thebes, home of the dynasty that would reunify Egypt and institute the brilliant Middle Kingdom.

Further Reading:

Dieter Arnold, *Building in Egypt: Pharaonic Stone Masonry*.

W. B. Emery, *Archaic Egypt*.

Questions to Consider:

1. What conditions in the Late Neolithic Age led to the emergence of an Egyptian kingdom under Narmer and his successors in the Archaic Age (3100–2700 B.C.)? Why were royal patronage and fiscal demands so important in directing cultural progress?
2. How did pharaohs exercise their power in the Nile valley? Why was the court at Memphis the center of Egyptian civilization? How were the pyramids a testimony to the success of royal power in the Old Kingdom?

Lecture Six

The Middle Kingdom

Scope: Rival dynasts clashed during the First Intermediate Period in Egypt (c. 2200–2050 B.C.) so that *nomarchs* and priests looked for a return to order and justice (*ma'at*) under righteous pharaohs. Mentuhotep II (r. c. 2060–2010 B.C.), prince of Thebes in Upper Egypt, founded Dynasty XI and reunified Egypt. The usurper Amenemhet I (r. 1991–1962 B.C.) founded the illustrious Dynasty XII of the Middle Kingdom, which transformed Egypt into a well-governed imperial order. The pharaohs of the Middle Kingdom, who ruled from Thebes, reorganized royal administration, sponsored irrigation and drainage projects, and promoted trade. They, too, required lavish royal burials, but in subterranean tombs bored out of the cliffs of the Valley of Kings on the west bank of the Nile and opposite Thebes. Foremost, the pharaohs were warriors, and Senwoset III (r. 1878–1843 B.C.) advanced the frontier to the second cataract in Nubia, founding military colonies and recruiting Nubian infantry into the royal army. The copper mines of Sinai were exploited, and Canaanite ports were brought into tributary alliance. Yet the pharaohs of Thebes faced hostility in Lower Egypt; under Dynasty XIII, rebellions erupted in the Delta. In the fighting, Egyptian pharaohs and rebels summoned Canaanite allies or mercenaries, known as Hyksos. In 1674 B.C., the Hyksos, experts in chariot warfare and fortifications, captured Memphis and ruled as foreign lords over Egypt for more than a century (1674–1544 B.C.).

Outline

- I. In this lecture, we look at the Egyptian Middle Kingdom, a period that is roughly contemporary with the Babylon of Hammurabi. This period saw the expansion of Egyptian horizons and the beginnings of administrative and institutional changes characteristic of the earlier Mesopotamian Empire.
- II. We shall begin by reviewing the conditions that brought the pharaohs of the Middle Kingdom to power.
 - A. As mentioned in the last lecture, royal power became ineffective shortly after 2200 B.C., and Egypt broke up into a series of competing kingdoms. The period from 2200–2050 B.C., called the First Intermediate Period, is often seen as a time of confusion.
 - B. *Lament literature*, from the period of the Middle Kingdom, was penned by members of the upper classes and describes the breakdown of *ma'at* (“justice”). In some ways, this literature was used to justify the position attained by the pharaohs of Dynasty XII, who attempted to style themselves as restorers of *ma'at*.
 - C. The princes of Thebes were minor figures, and the city itself served as a post for trade traveling into the Sudan. Prestige goods brought into Egypt lent authority to the pharaohs ruling at Memphis to impress the nobles and the *nomarchs* to serve the god-king.
 - D. As a frontier post, Thebes also gave its princes access to military power. Indeed, the pharaohs of Dynasty XII often recruited frontier peoples, including Nubians and Asiatic peoples, into military units.
- III. The success of the pharaohs of the Middle Kingdom is owed to Mentuhotep II (r. c. 2060–2010 B.C.), who founded Dynasty XI and transformed Thebes into the capital of Upper Egypt.
 - A. His successor, Mentuhotep III (r. c. 2009–1998 B.C.), brought all of Egypt under his control, acquired Memphis, and imposed order throughout the Nile valley. His reign represents the end of the period of disunity.
 - B. Mentuhotep III was followed by weak successors, and the dynastic family was overthrown by a vizier, Amenemhet I (r. 1991–1962 B.C.), who established his own family as Dynasty XII.
 1. Amenemhet carried the name of the patron god of Thebes, Amon (“hidden one”), not a particularly prominent divinity in the Egyptian cosmology.
 2. The pharaohs of Dynasty XII linked Amon with the god Ra, the premier Sun god of Egypt. The Sun was regarded as the eternal organizing principle in Egyptian religion and, thus, in the kingdom’s political institutions.
 3. Through a process that scholars call *syncretism*, the god Amon in Thebes became the equivalent of the god Ra in the Delta. They were seen as the same divinity but manifested in different ways.

4. The identification of the two gods was extremely successful; Amon became the protector god of the dynasty, and great temples were constructed to Amon in Luxor and Karnak.
 - C. The pharaohs of Dynasty XII also paid homage to Ra and endowed the temple to Ptah in Memphis. They promoted the cult of Osiris, lord of the underworld and judge of all Egyptians.
- IV. The pharaohs of Dynasty XII were adroit not only in their religious policies but also in carrying out administrative and legal reforms that would transform royal government in Egypt.
- A. As mentioned, the earliest pharaohs did not need to develop the kinds of political and military institutions that were seen in Sumer and Akkad. Starting with Amenemhet I, however, efforts were made to bring the independent *nomarchs* under control.
 - B. The royal administration was restructured. Egypt was divided into three parts (Upper, Middle, and Lower Egypt), and a new official, known as a *waret* (“recorder”), supervised each division.
 1. The *waret* was appointed by the pharaoh and was required to report to the pharaoh regularly.
 2. The *nomes* were kept in place, but the pharaohs now made a concerted effort to correspond with these districts.
 - C. The pharaohs also had to conduct what we might call public works projects to gain the reputation as upholders of *ma’at*.
 1. The pharaohs of Dynasty XII started the tradition of building subterranean tombs. The opulence of such tombs can be seen in the exhibitions of artifacts from the tomb of King Tutankhamun.
 2. Other projects included draining large sections of the Fayum area. By one estimate, the pharaohs of Dynasty XII reclaimed 17,000 acres for cultivation in this way over a period of two generations.
 3. Prestigious expeditions were sent out, including one to the coast of what is now Somalia, known to the Egyptians as the Land of Punt.
 4. Repairs were made to dikes and canals, and efforts were made to calculate the flooding of the Nile.
 5. Litigation was recorded, and attempts were made to ensure that *ma’at* was administered uniformly for all Egyptians.
- V. The pharaohs of Dynasty XII also had a policy of co-opting border peoples into the royal army—populations that might otherwise attack Egypt.
- A. Although the recruitment of a professional royal army was a major step, the equipment of these Egyptian armies was rather simple. Defense depended on a large wooden shield—there was no body armor—and infantrymen used a thrusting spear or a club in close combat.
 - B. These armies were used by the pharaohs to extend Egyptian control up the Nile, deep into what is now northern and middle Sudan. Senwoset III (1878–1843 B.C.) erected a boundary stone fixing the frontier of Egypt at the third cataract in Nubia.
 - C. In the region that the Romans called Palestine (today Israel and the West Bank), Egyptians conducted limited military operations against the Canaanites.
- VI. As a group, the pharaohs of Dynasty XII were an impressive family. They created the foundations of imperial and “classic” Egypt, and their institutions became the basis of the great imperial age under Dynasty XVIII. Given the record of these pharaohs, what went wrong?
- A. The pharaohs of Dynasty XII faced the problem that all pharaohs of Thebes faced; notably, the Egyptians of the Delta resented these southerners as outsiders.
 - B. The fact that the pharaohs of Dynasty XII chose to rule from Thebes produced a great deal of resentment, particularly in the great priestly families of Ptah and Ra in the Lower Kingdom.
 - C. Further, the regions of the Delta offered ideal conditions to carry out rebellions. The area is marshy and difficult to bring under control.
 - D. Starting late in Dynasty XII, in the reign of Amenemhet IV, rebellions broke out in the Delta, and an independent set of kings set up a capital there. These would become the pharaohs of Dynasty XIII and XIV.
 - E. In the civil wars that ensued after the fall of Dynasty XII, various candidates for the throne brought in mercenaries from Asia. Starting in 1674 B.C., these outsiders, known in the sources as Hyksos (“foreigners”), overthrew Egyptian rule and reigned as Dynasty XV.

1. This conquest came in two parts: First, Hyksos mercenaries were brought in and settled in the Delta, where they established strongholds. Then, an organized invasion was carried out by a Hyksos prince, who probably had a fleet.
2. The invading Hyksos army had certain advantages that the Egyptians had never seen. Hyksos warriors had bronze armor, horse-drawn light chariots, and composite bows.
3. Egyptian resistance collapsed. The Hyksos overthrew the pharaohs ruling in Memphis, established their own capital in the Delta, and imposed their authority over the Nile valley for the next 100 years.
4. The shock of this outside invasion galvanized the princes of Thebes to overthrow the foreigners and restore prosperity and unity in the Nile valley, opening the New Kingdom, the imperial age of Dynasty XVIII.

Further Reading:

Donald B. Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel in Ancient Times*.

H. E. Winlock, *The Rise and Fall of the Middle Kingdom in Thebes*.

Questions to Consider:

1. How did lament literature reflect expectations of royal rule among the elite classes? How well did the pharaohs of the Middle Kingdom meet these expectations for restoration of *ma'at*? Why did the pharaohs of Dynasty XII choose to associate themselves with the cults of Amon, Ptah, and Osiris?
2. What pragmatic measures did the pharaohs of Dynasty XII take to make effective royal will? How did they promote royal revenues and general prosperity of Egypt? How important was long-distance trade?
3. What accounted for political instability after about 1785 B.C.? Why did the pharaohs at Thebes face hostility in Lower Egypt?

Lecture Seven

Imperial Egypt

Scope: Khamose (r. 1570–1550 B.C.) founded Dynasty XVIII at Thebes and challenged the Hyksos kings of Avaris. Ahmose (r. c. 1550–1544 B.C.) forged a new royal army of chariots and Nubian infantry to expel the Hyksos and restore *ma'at* in Egypt. The pharaohs of Dynasty XVIII styled themselves as conquerors in memorial reliefs and painting and endowed the shrines of Amon, Ptah, and Ra with rich offerings of thanks. Hatshepsut (r. 1489–1479 B.C.), the first queen to rule in her own right, halted expansion in favor of building projects and diplomacy. But she alienated the military elite at Thebes, and her nephew, Thutmose III (r. 1479–1426 B.C.), seized power. Thutmose III waged 17 campaigns in Asia and organized an Asiatic empire. The transformation of Egyptian values and material life climaxed in the religious reforms of Akhenaton (r. 1352–1335 B.C.), who aimed to exalt his majesty as the oracular voice of the sole god Aton. Akhenaton sought to break the aristocracy at Thebes and imposed his monotheistic cult by force. Religious reform at home put the Asiatic empire in jeopardy, as the Hittite emperor Šuppiluliumaš (r. 1344–1322 B.C.) conquered northern Syria. Akhenaton had compromised his dynasty and the empire, and his heirs would abandon the cult of Aton. Warrior pharaohs of Dynasty XIX met the Hittite challenge in Asia, but Rameses II (r. 1279–1212 B.C.) achieved a stalemate at Kadesh and was forced to recognize Hittite supremacy in northern Syria. Rameses II and Merneptah (r. 1212–1200 B.C.) restored Egyptian rule in Palestine, but their heirs faced new invaders, the “Sea Peoples,” who ended Egyptian rule in Asia.

Outline

- I. This lecture looks at the New Kingdom (c. 1550–1150s B.C.), the period when the Egyptian monarchy came to play a dominant role in the Middle East and Egypt reached its political and cultural zenith.
- II. We shall begin by looking at the pharaohs of Dynasty XVIII (1570–1293 B.C.).
 - A. As you recall, Egypt had fallen under the control of Hyksos invaders, but the Hyksos ruled as a small military caste and never truly controlled the Nile valley.
 - B. The princes of Thebes again emerged as a force of unity in the Nile valley. The pharaohs of Dynasty XVIII, starting with the founder of the family, Khamose (r. 1570–1550 B.C.), adopted the military technology of the Hyksos and overthrew these foreign rulers. His successor, Ahmose (r. 1550–1544 B.C.), stormed Avaris and expelled the Hyksos.
 - C. The immediate successors of Ahmose, Amenhotep I (r. 1544–1520 B.C.), Thutmose I (r. 1520–1500 B.C.), and Thutmose II (r. 1500–1489 B.C.), conducted massive attacks into the region between the Mediterranean and the Jordan valley.
 - D. The Egyptians also pushed deep into the Sudan. The region known as Kush, south of the third cataract, was organized as a viceroyalty, and Nubia was incorporated into Egypt. The territorial extent of Egypt was greatly enlarged from what it had been in the Old or Middle Kingdom.
 - E. Imperial expansion halted briefly in the early 15th century B.C., during the reign of Queen Hatshepsut (r. 1489–1479 B.C.), daughter of Thutmose II, who ruled with the trappings of a male pharaoh.
 1. Hatshepsut halted imperial expansion for a good reason: She was married to a royal consort, a nephew or half-brother, the future Thutmose III. He was proclaimed as a joint ruler, although he was considerably younger than Hatshepsut. Any military operations launched by Thutmose III would benefit him, not Hatshepsut, who risked losing her throne.
 2. For this reason, she pioneered methods of promoting the monarchy that prefigured the policies of the heretic pharaoh Akhenaton (r. 1352–1335 B.C.). She promoted arts, building and irrigation programs, and high-prestige trade. Her temple, Deir el-Bahri, depicts a diplomatic mission to Punt, that is, the Somali coast.
 3. We are not quite sure what happened to this remarkable woman, but she probably died of an illness in 1479 B.C. In her final years, however, she was already losing power, and Thutmose III was able to assert himself. In 1482 B.C., he led an enormous Egyptian army into Asia and defeated a coalition of Canaanite kings at the Battle of Megiddo. This victory opened a new era of Egyptian expansion in Asia.

- III. The victories won by the early pharaohs of Dynasty XVIII transformed the Egyptian monarchy.
- A. Henceforth, the Egyptian pharaohs would be depicted in war garb; this iconography is seen in the tombs of later pharaohs, such as King Tutankhamun (r. 1335–1325 B.C.) and Rameses II (r. 1279–1212 B.C.), as well as on boundary markers proclaiming the power of the pharaohs.
 - B. Thutmose III (r. 1479–1426 B.C.) has been called the Napoleon of the Near East. He created the Egyptian Empire in Asia.
 - 1. Egyptian armies reached as far as the northern banks of the Euphrates and brought the various Canaanite princes of the Levant under Egyptian control.
 - 2. Egyptian governors were established in Asia, and the Asiatic provinces were ruled in much the same way that earlier pharaohs had ruled the *nomes*; that is, by co-opting the elite and cementing ties of friendship, hospitality, and marriage.
 - 3. Thutmose III was also heir to the administrative apparatus of the Middle Kingdom. The vastly expanded royal bureaucracy in Memphis was staffed by Asiatics who conducted international correspondence in Akkadian.
 - C. The Asiatic empire created by Thutmose III became the pillar of Dynasties XVIII and XIX, because it brought enormous wealth to the monarchy in the form of slaves, tribute, and commodities. This wealth transformed the monarchy by enabling the pharaohs to employ a professional army and bureaucracy.
 - D. The great national shrines also profited immensely, especially the shrines of Ptah, god of wisdom; Ra, the great Sun god of the Delta; and Amon, the protector of Dynasties XII and XVIII.
- IV. As noted in the previous lecture, pharaohs from Thebes faced opposition in Middle and Lower Egypt. Thus, the pharaohs of Dynasty XVIII had to prove themselves as upholders of *ma'at* and the traditional cults.
- A. Hatshepsut had transferred the capital from Thebes to Memphis, a move that was resented by the great families of Thebes. Thutmose III maintained the capital at Memphis; indeed, his successors made a concerted effort to develop the monarchy there and to support cults other than that of Amon, notably Ra.
 - B. The focus on Ra reflected the efforts of the pharaohs of Dynasty XVIII to make themselves presentable to their subjects in Lower Egypt and to break the power of the priestly families of Amon in Thebes.
 - C. This policy had important consequences: The monarchs became more dependent on imperial resources in the form of bureaucrats, scribes, and soldiers paid with the wealth of the Asiatic empire.
 - D. The pharaohs of Dynasty XVIII also promoted solar cults, which became more uniform and what some scholars would call *henotheistic*; that is, the Sun god was worshiped as the ultimate divine power manifested in many ways.
- V. The pharaoh Akhenaton (r. 1352–1335 B.C.), who came to the throne as Amenhotep IV, is perhaps the most intriguing figure in the New Kingdom.
- A. Until recently, we knew little about Akhenaton other than the fact that in the sixth year of his reign, he proclaimed a solar monotheism and ended the worship of other gods in Egypt. With the groundbreaking work of Professor Donald Redford, however, we have come to understand more about Akhenaton.
 - B. The pharaoh's shrines were destroyed after his death, in the reign of Horemheb (r. 1322–1293 B.C.), and his relief sculptures were smashed and used as fill for other monuments. When these 20,000 fragments (*talatat*) were recovered in excavation, Redford was able to reconstruct them into Akhenaton's wall relief.
 - C. Akhenaton changed his name from Amenhotep soon after he took the throne to celebrate and honor the god Aton, an early solar divinity. He also declared a new capital 300 miles north of Thebes. The site is now known as Tel el-Amarna but at the time was called Akhenaton ("the place effective of the glory of Aton").
 - D. In concentrating on religious reform, Akhenaton neglected the empire, which proved fatal for Dynasty XVIII. The Hittites arose as a new power in Asia Minor (modern Turkey); they invaded the Asiatic provinces and threatened to strip away the monarchy's imperial power base.
 - E. Akhenaton's successor, Tutankhamun, distanced himself from the solar cult of Aton and restored the worship of the ancient gods. Horemheb, a general who became successor to the throne, obliterated the solar cult.

- VI.** Besides launching a succession crisis in Egypt, Akhenaton also put the empire in jeopardy. Fortunately for Egypt, a series of generals contested the efforts of the Hittites to appropriate the Asiatic empire.
- A.** These pharaohs of Dynasty XIX, particularly Rameses II (r. 1279–1212 B.C.), attempted to beat back Hittite attacks and restore Egyptian frontiers in Asia. This climaxed in the Battle of Kadesh in 1275 B.C., a draw with the Hittites that marked the limit of revived Egyptian power.
 - B.** The successors of Rameses II faced not only the Hittites but the great migrations and changes that would come at the end of the Late Bronze Age. In our next lecture, we shall turn to the Hittites and the Mitanni, who would challenge the imperial power of Egypt and change the face of Near Eastern culture and politics.

Further Reading:

K. A. Kitchen, *Pharaoh Triumphant: The Life and Times of Ramesses II*.

Donald B. Redford, *Akhenaten: Heretic King*.

Questions to Consider:

1. What motivated Egyptian imperialism under the pharaohs of Dynasty XVIII? What were the benefits of Egypt's imperial experience? In what ways did the transformation of society and culture lead to the religious changes in the reign of Akhenaton?
2. How did Queen Hatshepsut and Pharaoh Thutmose III establish the policies expected for later pharaohs? How did Akhenaton break with these policies by promoting his solar monotheism? What were the costs of religious revolution for the monarchy and Egyptian society?

Lecture Eight

New Peoples of the Bronze Age

Scope: By trade and immigration, Sumerians carried their cuneiform writing and culture west into the Levant and eastern Anatolia and east into Elam, today southwestern Iran. At Elba in northern Syria, excavations have revealed the palaces and archives of West Semitic-speaking kings who ruled over an urbanized kingdom by 2600 B.C. By the Middle Bronze Age, great cities dotted the plains of northern Syria and the Levantine shores, sustained by trade with Mesopotamia and Egypt. In the upper Euphrates and Khabur valleys dwelled the Hurrians, who adapted and disseminated Mesopotamian mores, letters, and visual arts to the Hittites of Asia Minor. Under Indo-Aryan warrior kings, the Mitanni, Hurrian, and Canaanite cities were welded into a major kingdom by 1550 B.C. In central Anatolia, the Hittite kings of Hattuşas fielded the first chariot armies, and Šuppiliumaš I (r. 1344–1322 B.C.) and his heirs battled the pharaohs of Egypt for domination of the Levant. By seaborne commerce, the Minoans of Crete, too, learned of the writing and arts of Near Eastern civilization. By 2100 B.C., the fleets of the kings at Cnossos dominated the Aegean Sea, and in Minoan Crete were the cultural foundations of Classical Greece. In 1600–1400 B.C., Greek-speaking lords of central and southern Greece adopted Minoan arts and aesthetics, overthrew Minoan Cnossos, and clashed with the Hittite emperors.

Outline

- I. This lecture completes our examination of the Bronze Age. We shall look at three areas that came under the influence of the civilizations we have been discussing—those in Mesopotamia, Sumer and Akkad, and in the Nile valley.
 - A. The first of these areas is the western arm of the Fertile Crescent, including the Levant and sections of the middle and upper Euphrates, especially the valley of the Khabur River and the al-Jazirah.
 - B. The second area we shall explore is Anatolia, or Asia Minor, what is today Asiatic Turkey.
 - C. Finally, we shall briefly look at the Aegean world, that is, central and southern Greece, the islands of Greece, and the island of Crete.
- II. The primary agent of this outward influence was long-distance trade.
 - A. The region called by Roman historians Greater Syria, that is, the region stretching from the northern frontiers of Syria today down to the Red Sea, was broken up into diverse zones.
 1. The northern sections bordered on the upper Euphrates.
 2. The long coastal strip of Phoenicia, most of which is Lebanon today, was defined by the sea and high mountains.
 3. The interior is watered by two important rivers, the Orontes, flowing north and emptying into the Gulf of Alexandretta, and the Litani, which cuts across Lebanon and southern Syria.
 4. In the far south is the Jordan valley, flowing into the Sea of Galilee and ending at the Dead Sea.
 5. The highlands to the west of the Jordan valley were the traditional home of the Hebrews.
 6. The coastal plain is notable for the city of Gaza.
 - B. Evidence of early urban civilization (c. 2600 B.C.) is found in the northern reaches of Syria, in the Orontes valley. This civilization was ruled over by West Semitic kings, and its citizens used cuneiform script for their Semitic dialect. By the Middle Bronze Age (2000–1550 B.C.), northern Syria was dotted with walled cities.
 - C. The ports of northern Syria and Phoenicia acted as the conduits to connect Egyptian civilization with early Mesopotamian civilization. At one of those ports, Ugarit, at the mouth of the Orontes River, the first syllabary was devised around 1850 B.C.
 - D. The ports of northern Syria and Lebanon were also in touch with the Aegean world, and through these ports, many of the influences of the Near East would pass to Crete and, ultimately, to Greece.
 - E. By the Middle Bronze Age, when the Egyptian armies began to appear, there was a series of powerful kingdoms in Greater Syria, notably, Megiddo, Hazor, Tunip, and Kadesh.

- III.** The region of the al-Jazirah was occupied by the Hurrians.
- A.** The Hurrians moved into the region between 2500–2000 B.C. and settled in what are now eastern Syria and western Iraq.
 - B.** They adapted the institutions of Akkadian and Sumerian civilization and transmitted them to Asia Minor and points west. In that sense, they played a vital role in the formation of the Hittite civilization.
 - C.** The Hurrians came chiefly as merchants; they were, however, mobilized into an effective military force shortly before the emergence of Egypt as a great kingdom in the 16th century B.C.
 - D.** This mobilization was carried out by Indo-Aryan speakers of obscure origin called the Mitanni. These people seem to represent a warrior elite and were experts in chariot warfare.
 - E.** By 1550 B.C., the Mitanni had organized the Hurrians into the main political order dominating Mesopotamia.
 - F.** The Mitanni proved to be tough opponents for the Egyptians. The immediate successors of Thutmose III negotiated an understanding with the kings of the Mitanni to share rule of northern Syria and maintain the Euphrates as a common frontier.
- IV.** The second major area to examine is Asia Minor, which also came under the influence of Mesopotamian civilization through trade.
- A.** Trade goods have surfaced at two royal sites of the Early Bronze Age in this region: Troy II, site of the Trojan War, and Alaça Hüyük, perhaps the later Hittite city of Arrina or Zippalanda.
 - B.** The Akkadian emperors waged wars in this region, and starting from 1900 B.C. on, Assyrian merchants moved into the cities of central Asia Minor and established merchant communities.
 - C.** Influences from Mesopotamia stimulated the Hittites to coalesce into kingdoms around 1700 B.C.
 - D.** The early Hittite kings unified central Asia Minor into a powerful confederation known as the Hittite Old Kingdom. This kingdom was centered on the capital of Hattušas (Bogazkale), east of the Halys River.
 - E.** Two of the early Hittite kings, Hattušiliš I (r. 1650–1620 B.C.) and his son, Mursiliš I (r. 1620–1590 B.C.), carried out a methodical conquest of southeastern Asia Minor and advanced into the lands of Syria.
 - F.** Mursiliš I, third of the known kings of the Hittite dynasty, conducted a raid into Babylon around 1595 B.C., recorded in literary accounts of the Near East. The sacking of the city proved how unsuccessful Hammurabi's heirs had been in maintaining imperial defenses.
 - G.** Mursiliš I was murdered upon his return, and the Hittite kingdom experienced a series of succession crises for the next several generations. The Hittites only managed to reemerge as a power through the efforts of several remarkable rulers late in the Bronze Age.
 - 1.** The first of these was Šuppiluliumaš I (r. 1344–1322 B.C.). Through him, the Hittites were able to capitalize on Egyptian weakness and overrun the northern and central provinces of Syria, stripping the Egyptian monarchy of vital imperial possessions.
 - 2.** Šuppiluliumaš was succeeded by two sons, Mursiliš II (r. 1321–1295 B.C.) and Muwatallis (r. 1295–1272 B.C.), both of whom proved to be able campaigners, and both understood that Hittite power could be maintained by conquering the wealthy cities of the east.
 - H.** In many ways, the Hittites represented a preview of the types of imperial institutions that would later be used by Rome. They established military colonies, constructed road systems, and were adept at imposing vassal treaties.
 - I.** Muwatallis clashed with Rameses II, the pharaoh of Dynasty XIX who sought to retake Egyptian possessions. This climaxed in the Battle of Kadesh which was, essentially, a draw. Rameses III later had to sign a treaty with Hattušiliš III acknowledging his loss of Egypt's northern and central possessions.
- V.** The third area we shall discuss briefly is the Aegean world, which also had a basis in the earlier river-valley civilizations.
- A.** Evidence from excavations in the Greek world reveals that many of the cultural forms, aesthetic traditions, and material culture of Classical Greece arose in the so-called Bronze Age of Greece (2800–1200 B.C.).

- B. Civilization emerged in the Aegean world on the island of Crete. The people of Crete devised a hierarchical society comparable to what we saw in the Near East. By 2100 B.C., the kings of the city of Cnossos had united the island and established control of the sea.
- C. The people of this civilization, the Minoans, were responsible for spreading their literacy and arts across the Aegean and into mainland Greece. From 1600 B.C., the people in southern and central Greece, that is, the Mycenaean of the Greek heartland, adopted much of the civilization of Minoan Crete.
- D. What emerged in southern and central Greece was a series of about 12 kingdoms, each ruled by a *wanax* (“lord”). These rulers controlled hierarchical societies, adopted chariot warfare by 1500–1400 B.C., and acquired expertise in shipbuilding and ship warfare from the Minoans. Indeed, around 1400 B.C., Mycenaean Greeks sacked the palace of Cnossos. Thereafter, Crete was incorporated into a wider Mycenaean, Greek-speaking world.
- E. These Mycenaean or Achaean warlords had quite a different record from the Minoans, but they, too, were the heirs of the urban, literate tradition that can be traced back to Sumer and Akkad. As we’ll see in upcoming lectures, however, all these civilizations would come tumbling down in the decades after 1200 B.C.

Further Reading:

T. Bryce, *The Kingdom of the Hittites*.

———, *Life and Society in the Hittite World*.

Questions to Consider:

1. What was the role played by the Hurrians in transmitting Sumerio-Akkadian culture to Asia Minor? Why did later Hittite kings admire Hurrian culture?
2. How were Minoan and Mycenaean civilizations part of a wider Near Eastern civilization in the Bronze Age? What elements of Minoan and Mycenaean civilization were transmitted to Classical Greece?

Lecture Nine

The Collapse of the Bronze Age

Scope: Between 1225 and 1050 B.C., the great empires of the Late Bronze Age fell in the wake of migrations and barbarian invasions usually associated with the advent of iron technology, but the imperial order of the Late Bronze Age did not collapse so much as fragment. Civilization in Egypt and Babylonia exhibited continuity between the Bronze and Iron Ages, whereas urban, literate civilization was disrupted in the Levant, Anatolia, and the Aegean world—all regions that adopted alphabetic writing in the Iron Age. In the Late Bronze Age, kings of the Near East and petty dynasts of the Aegean world, facing rising administrative and military costs, had recruited greater numbers of barbarian warriors. Innovations in weapons and tactics undermined the dominance of the chariot and shifted the military balance to the frontier peoples. In the Aegean world, the palaces of Achaean lords were sacked; in Asia Minor, the Hittite Empire fell. The Sea Peoples swarming out of these regions ended Egyptian imperial rule in the Levant by 1050 B.C. The ensuing world of the Early Iron Age was politically divided and culturally diverse. The great palaces of Mycenaean Greece disappeared in favor of small communities destined to evolve into the city-states of Classical Greece. Phrygians dwelled in central Anatolia, while Neo-Hittite kings ruled over the former southeastern Hittite provinces. The Levant was shared between the Aramaeans, newcomers, and the Canaanites, who had redefined themselves as Phoenicians and Hebrews. Even in Egypt and Babylonia there was change, for Libyan and Nubian military elites dominated the Nile valley, and the Assyrians aspired to rule Babylon.

Outline

- I. This lecture looks at the collapse of the political and cultural order that had emerged by about 1550 B.C. in the Near East. The collapse occurred shortly before 1200 B.C. and is connected with the migration of new peoples, the emergence of new societies, and the introduction of iron technology.
 - A. The collapse of the Bronze Age is often compared to the fall of the western Roman Empire in the 5th century A.D.
 - B. This lecture discusses some of the explanations that have been put forth for why the collapse occurred and examines some of the changes in civilization that took place in the Early Iron Age.
- II. Archaeologists have advanced a number of explanations for the collapse of the imperial orders in the Near East.
 - A. Efforts have been made to link the collapse of organized civilizations with natural catastrophes, such as changes in climatic conditions or a pandemic, but these theories cannot be sustained by evidence. Most of the population decline that can be detected is the result of the destruction of cities brought on by war.
 - B. Older textbooks theorize that various invaders wielding superior iron weapons moved in and overthrew the earlier civilizations. For example, the Dorians, a group of West Greek speakers, are said to have invaded the Aegean world and overtaken the Mycenaean palaces of the Late Bronze Age. Again, no documented evidence attests to battles with newcomers armed with superior weapons. In fact, iron weapons did not come into general use until about 900 B.C.
 - C. The answer probably lies in the weaknesses of the institutions and cultures of the Late Bronze Age.
 1. All of the great political and cultural orders of the Late Bronze Age—imperial Egypt, the Hittite Empire, the kingdom of the Mitanni, and even the petty dynasts who ruled under the title *wanax* in Greece—faced high costs of government.
 2. The rulers of these civilizations had a great appetite for money. The pharaohs in Egypt and the Hittite kings, in particular, felt the need to display the power of their courts through elaborate ceremonies and the construction of great palace-temple complexes.
 3. The costs of maintaining royal bureaucracies and professional armies were also significant. As we've said, Egyptians led the way in recruiting frontier peoples for military service: The Libyans became all-important to the Egyptian infantry, and vast numbers of Asiatics were recruited into chariot armies. The Hittites followed suit: Their armies comprised numerous allies from western Asia Minor and other regions.

4. Warfare was no longer a matter of minor clashes. For example, in the campaign that climaxed at the Battle of Kadesh in 1275 B.C. between the Hittite and Egyptian armies, at least 5,000 chariots were pitted against each other in a battle involving 75,000 men.
5. In conducting these campaigns, the great monarchs armed the very frontier peoples who would ultimately seize power for themselves. Robert Drews has pointed out that changes in warfare were not brought about by the shift from bronze to iron technology but by changes in tactics and weapons associated with the frontier peoples. At the end of the Bronze Age, warfare required skilled, agile warriors who could fan out in light infantry formations and break up chariot attacks.

III. The extent of the collapse of the Late Bronze Age varied in different civilizations.

- A. In the newer areas, the zones where civilization was received from the earlier river-valley cores, the destruction was at its most violent.
- B. In contrast, in Egypt and Babylonia, urban, literate civilization survived. We find linguistic, cultural, and demographic continuity between the Bronze and the Iron Ages.
- C. To some extent, we can determine which areas went under and which came through the collapse based on the writing systems used in the Iron Age. In Egypt, hieroglyphics continued, as did cuneiform script in Mesopotamia. In the Levant, Asia Minor, and the Greek world, however, the Early Iron Age saw a period of illiteracy, during which writing was lost. Literacy later reappeared, with the adoption of an alphabetic system invented by the Phoenicians around 1000 B.C.

IV. Migrations at the end of the Bronze Age led to a profound rearrangement of the political and cultural landscape.

- A. In the Greek world, the great palaces of the warlords and royal centers were burned, with the exception of Athens, around 1225–1200 B.C. With the destruction of the palaces came the end of long-distance trade, the complicated bureaucracy, and the elite warrior class that had sustained the monarchs. After 1000–900 B.C., the organization of Greece returned to scattered communities that would eventually evolve into the *poleis* (“city-states”) of Classical Greece.
- B. In Asia Minor, the Hittite Empire fragmented. The western and central sections fell, and new peoples emerged, primarily the Phrygians, who occupied central Anatolia. Excavations of their capital at Gordian reveal that the society there had adopted the alphabetic system and was in touch with the Greek world. Political order returned to Asia Minor after a period of almost 350 years of disorder and disruption.
- C. In the southeastern sections of the old Hittite Empire, some of the imperial traditions held on. Noble families who claimed descent from the great emperors of the Bronze Age ruled over small regional states in what is now northern Syria and southwestern Turkey. The Neo-Hittites were also linked to the Urartians, a people located immediately to their east in Armenia around Lake Van, who had their capital at Tushpa.
 1. The Neo-Hittite kingdoms are the equivalent of medieval Byzantium—the political heir of Rome but culturally Greek.
 2. The eastern sections of the Hittite Empire, which had been the most urbanized and civilized, survived. They were culturally part of the Hurrian-Mesopotamian world but claimed to be the political and legal heirs of the old Hittite kings.
- D. Reconfigurations in the political and linguistic landscape also took place in the Levant. Two peoples emerged: One group was Semitic speakers from the desert known as Aramaeans, who were the first people to domesticate the camel in the 9th and 8th centuries B.C. This development changed the trade routes in the Near East, launching the caravan networks that we think of in the Middle East today.
 1. The Aramaeans took over important cities in Syria, notably Damascus, and Aramaic became the commercial language of the caravan trade from the 8th century B.C. to the Muslim conquest.
 2. The pioneering of caravan routes by the Aramaeans led to the revival of trade and city life and sustained the reemergence of civilization in the Early Iron Age.
- E. The Phoenicians settled as far as Gades (modern Cadiz) in southern Spain and Carthage in North Africa.
 1. In the collapse of Bronze Age civilization, the “Sea Peoples” attacked the shores of the Levant and invaded Egypt. These invasions disrupted the Egyptian Empire, although the pharaohs were able to beat back the invaders. The price was the loss of the Asiatic empire for Egypt after 1040 B.C.
 2. The Egyptians’ loss allowed Phoenician cities to emerge as commercial centers. Starting from 1000 B.C., the Phoenicians were responsible for the revival of sea routes and their extension into the western Mediterranean.

3. Phoenicians invented the alphabet and, above all, pioneered marketing in the Iron Age; they sold manufactured goods from the Near East to North Africa, the Greek world, Italy, and Spain.
- F. Among all the “new peoples,” the ones who would have the most significant impact after 900 B.C. must have seemed to contemporaries to be the least important. This would be the Hebrews, dwelling in the highlands between the Jordan valley and the coastal plain occupied by the Philistines. We shall turn to these people in the next lecture.

Further Reading:

Robert Drews, *The End of the Bronze Age: Changes in Warfare and the Catastrophe ca. 1200 B.C.*

N. Sandars, *The Sea Peoples: Warriors of the Ancient Mediterranean, 1250–1150 B.C.*

Questions to Consider:

1. What led to the collapse of the political and cultural order of the Late Bronze Age after 1200 B.C.? How did conditions in the Aegean world, Anatolia, and the Levant differ from those in Egypt and Babylonia?
2. Who were the important newcomers in the Near East of the Early Iron Age? Why did the Aramaeans and Phoenicians play such a crucial role? What was the political situation in Asia Minor? Why did these new societies act as intermediaries between the Near East and the nascent Greek world?

Lecture Ten

From Hebrews to Jews

Scope: The Hebrews are first documented in contemporary sources of the Near East in the 9th century B.C., when cuneiform and Aramaic texts report the kings of Israel and Judah, who claimed descent from King David. The two Hebrew kingdoms were united in their common worship of Yahweh, although each had its own sanctuary, and many Hebrews worshiped the Canaanite gods on the “high places.” The dynasty of King Omri (884–873 B.C.) and Ahab (873–852 B.C.) forged a state with institutions comparable to the Neo-Hittite and Aramaic kingdoms, but their heirs ran afoul of the Assyrian kings, resulting in the sack of Dan by Sennacherib and the breaking of Israelite power. Population and prosperity shifted to the southern kingdom, Judah, where the kings Hezekiah (727–698 B.C.) and Josiah (640–609 B.C.) conducted a reform of the worship of Yahweh. In 586 B.C., King Nebuchadnezzar II (605–556 B.C.) sacked Jerusalem and deported the city’s ruling classes to Babylonia. During the Babylonian Captivity (c. 586–539 B.C.), Hebrew priests and psalmists defined the transcendence of Yahweh and initiated the editing of the Torah. In so doing, they also defined Judaism as a faith detached from place and, thus, altered forever the conception of religion in the Western tradition.

Outline

- I. This lecture deals with the evolution of the Hebrew peoples into the Jews, a transformation that occurred in the Iron Age.
- II. The first five books of the Christian Old Testament constitute Torah, the law of Moses. The narrative books that follow, such as Joshua, Judges, and so on, continue the story of the Hebrews and are the result of composition in the period after the so-called Babylonian Captivity (c. 586–539 B.C.).
 - A. Scholars designate the editorial traditions of the Hebrews as E, J, P, and D, each of which offers a unique conception of the godhead.
 - 1. E represents the earliest tradition in the Old Testament, evidenced by references to God using the term *Elohim* (“Lord” or “Lords”).
 - 2. The J, or Jehovah, tradition was clearly passed on by authors who had a powerful sense of the monotheistic God.
 - 3. The P, or Priestly, tradition is usually thought to come from authors in Babylonia and later. These authors, writing in Babylon after 535 B.C., put together the documents in their final form, a brilliant religious vision of the evolution of the people of Israel from earliest times through the covenant with Moses, the Divided Kingdom, the restoration from Babylon, and the fulfillment of God’s promise.
 - 4. Finally, the D, or Deuteronomy, tradition, gives yet another vision of the godhead that influenced the later narrative books.
 - B. These traditions do not represent a coherent historical narrative, but they do give us a window into what society must have been like for the Hebrews, who came under considerable stress with the collapse of Bronze Age civilization.
- III. The Bronze Age collapse was decisive in the destruction of the Egyptian Empire.
 - A. The Sea Peoples coming out of the Aegean assaulted Egyptian possessions in the Levant, including the historic kingdoms of Israel and Judah. The weakening of Egyptian rule on the Levantine shore was significant in shaping the Hebrew kingdoms and identity.
 - B. The Philistines, who are believed to have originated in Crete, were driven onto the shores of Israel sometime between 1100–1150 B.C. They are remembered in the Old Testament as interlopers. They forced the Hebrews to organize themselves into effective kingdoms.
 - C. We have no written documentation of the Hebrews from contemporary Near Eastern records before 1200 B.C., but the core of the Hebrew kingdoms has been the subject of intense archaeological work.
 - 1. There was probably always a distinction between the northern zone, Israel, running along a line near Jericho, and the southern zone, Judah, around Jerusalem.

2. The northern zone was more densely populated and wealthier and would become the kingdom of Israel, with cult centers at Dan and Shechem (Samaria).
- D. The Hebrews clearly had a memory of the kings Saul, David, and Solomon. In 1993, excavations at Dan uncovered an Aramaic inscription naming a victory over a king of Israel, perhaps King Omri (884–873 B.C.) or his son, Ahab (873–852 B.C.). Significantly, the Aramaic inscription notes that this king was of the house of David.
 - E. The Hebrews also faced competitors to the east, in the Jordan valley. There, we have the inscription of King Mesha of Moab, which again, tells us of wars with Israel and highlights the position of Israel as sandwiched between dangerous rivals to the east and the west.
- IV. The development of the Hebrews into effective kingdoms came quite late.
- A. Cities first appeared in the northern kingdom under King Omri and his successors. Omri was a tough mercenary general who had extinguished the line of David. Ahab, the second in the Omrid line, is the first named biblical king, recorded in a cuneiform text as participating in the Battle of Qarqar (853 B.C.) against the Assyrian king Shalmaneser III. Ahab's military resources in the battle point to Israel's position as the third most important kingdom in a coalition of 10 states.
 - B. Archaeology bears this out: In the 9th and 8th centuries B.C., Israel experienced major urban development. The Hebrews embarked on building programs and promoted the worship of Yahweh at cult centers.
 - C. The dynasty in Israel, although politically and economically far more significant than Judah, was too prominent in Near Eastern politics. In the 8th century, Israel became caught up with its neighbors in the imperialism of the Assyrian kings.
 - D. Eventually, the Israelite kingdom submitted to the Assyrians as a client state. Several rebellions followed, ending in a colossal failure around 724–721 B.C. with the Assyrian deportation of the "Ten Lost Tribes."
 1. The tribes were relocated to the upper Tigris and settled as military colonists on the Iranian frontier.
 2. The Hebrews who remained in Israel mixed with colonists of the Assyrian Empire. The resulting fusion produced the Samaritans.
- V. The fall of the kingdom of Israel is an important factor in the Hebrew self-identity and religious conceptions.
- A. Power shifted to Jerusalem abruptly. The Assyrians reduced Judah, or Judaea, to a province. The kings ruling in Judah paid tribute to the Assyrian kings but were fundamentally left alone. Thus, Jerusalem began to emerge as the capital of an effective kingdom.
 - B. Under the kings Hezekiah (727–698 B.C.) and Josiah (640–609 B.C.), Judah became the political and religious center of the Hebrews. These two righteous kings imposed strict monotheism on the population, and Judah asserted itself as the successor to the Davidic kingdom.
 - C. This position is confirmed by economic and social developments; under the Assyrian kings, Judah prospered. The kingdom also managed to stay outside of the destructive wars waged at the time by the Assyrian kings.
 - D. After the Assyrian Empire collapsed, the kings of Judah ran afoul of its successors, the Neo-Babylonian kings, including Nebuchadnezzar II (605–556 B.C.). In 587/6 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem and deported the upper classes to Babylon in the so-called Babylonian Captivity.
 - E. This deportation was another important step in the development of Hebrew monotheism. The ruling, literate classes were exiled for a period of about 40 years, down to 539 B.C. In that year, the Persian king Cyrus the Great conquered Babylon, returned the Hebrew exiles to Jerusalem, and permitted the rebuilding of the Temple.
 - F. During the exile, monotheistic Judaism as we understand it today was defined. The monarchy of Judah had been destroyed, and the Hebrews were unable to perform their religious rites, yet they did not become assimilated into Babylonian society. Instead, they redefined the powers of Yahweh; this God was universal, omniscient, and omnipotent, and his worship did not depend on any particular location or rites.
 - G. When the upper classes were returned from Babylon to Jerusalem, they carried with them a powerful conception of the godhead. Further, they now emphasized the importance of the written word in understanding the godhead.

- VI. The Hebrew prophets and poets composed psalms and conceived of the God of Abraham, Yahweh, as lord of the universe.
- A. These poets described the covenant with Abraham, the arrival of the Hebrews in Egypt and their liberation by Moses, and the conquest of Canaan as the delivery of the promise of Yahweh. The Hebrew kingdoms came together under Saul, reached their pinnacle under David and Solomon, then broke into the Divided Kingdoms.
 - B. What comes through in this powerful religious vision are the traditions encapsulated in Exodus in the Ten Commandments, primarily the first one: “Thou shalt have no other gods before me.”
 - 1. The Hebrew religious vision was fundamentally at odds with all other religious visions that we know of in the Near East: God is transcendent and not part of nature.
 - 2. Efforts have been made to link this Hebrew monotheism with other such conceptions in the Near East. The Hebrew poets, however, clearly had a transcendent vision of the godhead; this perception is one of the great religious ideas in the Western tradition.
 - 3. Further, the God of the Hebrews was conceptualized with human personality but without human limitations. He is not defined or limited in myths, as are the other gods of the Near East.
 - 4. Finally, the Hebrew God acts through human affairs, making the struggles of humans important in and of themselves.
 - C. The religious vision of the Hebrews ultimately became the religious, ethical, and philosophical perception of the West.

Further Reading:

I. Finkelstein and N. A. Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology's New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of Its Sacred Texts*.

A. Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible, 10,000–586 B.C.E.*

Questions to Consider:

- 1. What were the literary and religious traditions of the Pentateuch (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy)? What were the religious objectives of these works, and how does each conceive of the godhead?
- 2. What were the political and economic conditions of the Early Iron Age that contributed to the development of monotheism? How important were the roles of the prophets and the righteous kings of Judah? What was the importance of the Babylonian Captivity?

Lecture Eleven

Imperial Assyria

Scope: The Neo-Assyrian kings (911–612 B.C.) forged the first imperial order in the Near East since the collapse of the political order of the Late Bronze Age. The kings of Ashur, who saw themselves as the political and cultural heirs of the Akkadian Empire, acquired iron technology and fielded a formidable imperial army. In the 10th and 9th centuries B.C., Assyrian kings brought to heel the Aramaean princes on their borders and battled Neo-Hittite kings under the leadership of Hamath and Carchemish. Setbacks and civil war after the Battle of Qarqar in 853 B.C. nearly undermined the Assyrian kingdom, but Tiglath-Pileser III (745–727 B.C.) forged new institutions; hence his heirs, from Sargon II (721–705 B.C.) to Ashurbanipal II (669–631 B.C.), ruled the first imperial order embracing both Egypt and Mesopotamia. The Assyrians transmitted to later empires their provincial administration, use of highways and military colonies, and taxation in silver. Assyrian kings promoted prosperity, arts, and Akkadian literature. Yet Assyrian kings were remembered for their ruthless treatment of the defeated and the rebellious. In 612 B.C., Babylon, under Chaldaean kings, and the Medes of Iran allied to overthrow Assyrian rule and sack Nineveh.

Outline

- I. The Assyrians are among the most important people to emerge out of the end of the Bronze Age and the beginning of the Iron Age. Around 911 B.C., they began to launch out into a series of campaigns that culminated in the unification of the entire Near East, including both the Nile valley and the Tigris–Euphrates valley.
- II. First we shall look at the background of Assyria in an attempt to answer the question: Why was it the Assyrians who would unite the Near East? Why not the Egyptians or the Babylonians?
 - A. The Egyptians and Babylonians found themselves in a peculiar situation by the opening of the Iron Age. By 1040 B.C., the Egyptians had lost their Asiatic empire, and Egyptian political and military power increasingly rested in the hands of border peoples, notably Libyans.
 1. The Libyan pharaohs were primarily concerned with maintaining their position in the Nile valley.
 2. Further, they faced the disappointing fact that Egypt did not have iron deposits nor easy access to such deposits, at a time when iron was becoming the metal of choice for the manufacture of weapons.
 3. Thus, Egypt was not in a position to play the same role that it had played in the Late Bronze Age.
 - B. The situation in Babylonia was also complicated, divided between a foreign military elite that had moved in at the end of the Bronze Age and the native population. The newcomers here were the Chaldeans, kinsmen of the Aramaeans who had seized control in Babylon. This region, too, lacked access to iron deposits.
 - C. The Assyrians, who controlled the upper valley of the Tigris, were close to any number of metal deposits and had access to many potential military recruits. Further, it was a cardinal principle of Assyrian foreign policy to drive west, to gain control of the upper Euphrates and the Khabur River, as well as the grasslands of the al-Jazirah. In achieving these goals, the Assyrians would have a stranglehold on key trade routes entering Babylonia.
 - D. The Assyrians enjoyed a succession of truly able monarchs, stretching back into the Bronze Age.
 1. The first of these that we know anything about is Ashur-uballit I (1365–1330 B.C.), who shook off the power of the Mitanni.
 2. Ashur-uballit was followed by a succession of kings who expanded Assyrian power across northern Mesopotamia, overthrew the Mitanni, and threatened both Egypt and the Hittite Empire.
 3. The Assyrian emperor Tukulti-Ninurta I (1244–1208 B.C.) marched down the Tigris and briefly captured Babylon from the Kassite king. However, he could not hold on to this conquest, and after his death, the Assyrians experienced the same difficulties as other states in the Late Bronze Age.
- III. During the ensuing two centuries of disruption, the Assyrian kings forged an army that would launch out to conquer the Near East.

- A. In 911 B.C., Adad-nirari II (911–891 B.C.) launched a new series of wars in two directions: west, to bring the region between the Euphrates and the Mediterranean under Assyrian control, and east, toward Babylon. Throughout the 9th century B.C., Assyrian kings conducted massive raids in these areas to impose vassalage and exact tribute.
 - B. The self-image of Assyrian kings was one of great power. These rulers were often depicted on lion hunts, conducting campaigns, and subduing cities. The inscription for Ashur-nasirpal II (883–859 B.C.), for example, tells us of his brutal punishment of a rebellious city.
- IV. By the end of the 9th century B.C., the Assyrians began to encounter far more difficult coalitions that they were unable to defeat easily.
- A. In 853 B.C. at the Battle of Qarqar, for instance, King Shalmaneser III (858–824 B.C.) was checked by a coalition of 10 Syrian princes.
 - B. When the Assyrian general Pul seized the throne in 745 B.C. under the dynastic name Tiglath-Pileser III (745–727 B.C.), the administration of the dynasty was reorganized, and the Assyrians began to conquer and rule methodically, rather than simply plundering their neighbors.
 - C. Tiglath-Pileser III and his heirs incorporated many of the neighboring kingdoms as provinces. The Neo-Hittite kingdoms were annexed between 745–717 B.C., as were the Aramaean kingdoms in Syria.
 - D. The Assyrians also forced many of the states in the Near East to develop economically in order to pay tribute to their conquerors.
 - E. Further, the Assyrians constructed highways and established military garrisons. In regions where a client king was kept in place, he was usually supervised by an Assyrian inspector.
 - F. The result of this organization was that Tiglath-Pileser was able to carry out some spectacular campaigns.
 - 1. He annexed much of southeastern Asia Minor and northern Syria, securing access to the ports of the Mediterranean.
 - 2. He committed the Assyrian monarchy for the next century to penetration into Asia Minor. In so doing, he saddled his successors, Sargon II (721–705 B.C.) and Sennacherib (705–681 B.C.), with long wars against the Phrygians and the Cimmerians.
- V. At the same time, Tiglath-Pileser, by his expansion, left to Sargon II the problem of dealing with Egypt and Babylon.
- A. The Egyptian pharaohs encouraged revolts among the Phoenicians, Aramaeans, and Hebrews, then failed to provide aid. This brought the Assyrian armies into the Hebrew kingdoms and resulted in the destruction of Israel around 722 B.C. and the deportation of the Israelite tribes.
 - B. The Babylonians repeatedly resisted Assyrian efforts to rule them. The grandson of Tiglath-Pileser, Sennacherib, twice moved into Babylon to put down major rebellions. In the second rebellion, Babylon was sacked (689 B.C.), and its cult statues were removed to the Assyrian capital.
 - C. Sennacherib's son, Esarhaddon (681–669 B.C.), realized that Babylon was the natural economic and intellectual center of Mesopotamia and commissioned the rebuilding of the city.
 - D. Esarhaddon also carried out his father's policy of reckoning with Egypt. He conducted the first successful invasion of Egypt for which we have records. The Assyrian army crossed the Sinai, entered the Delta, crushed the Kushite army, and occupied Memphis in 671 B.C.
 - E. Unfortunately for Esarhaddon, the Assyrians failed to hold Egypt. Shortly after his death, his son, Ashurbanipal II (669–631 B.C.), faced a rebellion in Egypt, and the Assyrians were forced to give up this territory after 663 B.C.
 - F. The reign of Ashurbanipal II marked both the epitome and the collapse of the Assyrian state.
 - 1. During his reign, Ashurbanipal II sponsored extensive economic and public activities.
 - 2. He faced, however, the same problem of winning the loyalty of the conquered populations than had plagued Assyrian monarchs since 911 B.C. As effective as the Assyrian administrative apparatus and military were, the empire was rocked by repeated rebellions.
 - G. The failure of the Assyrians to reconcile the Babylonians to their rule, along with the organization of the Iranian peoples to the east (the Medes and Persians), probably resulted in the Assyrians' downfall.

1. Two years after the death of Ashurbanipal, the Chaldean client king ruling in Babylon, Nabopolassar (627–605 B.C.), rebelled, declaring himself king of Babylon.
 2. The reorganized Babylonian army, in alliance with the Medes from the east, took on the Assyrian Empire, capturing Nineveh in 612 B.C. after a three-year siege.
- VI.** For all the destruction of the Assyrian Empire and the evil reputation of the Assyrians, they had achieved a great deal. They had proved that the Near East could be united, breaking down provincial and local barriers by their policies of deportation and their application of central administration.
- A. We can draw a parallel between Sumer, Babylon, and Assyria, on the one hand, and Crete, Greece, and Rome, on the other.
 - B. Sumer and Crete created the civilizations; Babylon and Greece brought those civilizations to their intellectual heights; and Assyria and Rome extended the political and legal boundaries of those civilizations.
 - C. However, the Assyrians never had the genius of Rome in securing the loyalty and the energies of their conquered people. Nonetheless, the Assyrian imperial experiment was all-important to the last great people of the ancient Near East, the Persians.

Further Reading:

J. M. Russell, *Sennacherib's Palace without Rival at Nineveh*.

H. W. F. Saggs, *The Might That Was Assyria*.

Questions to Consider:

1. What resources did Assyria possess that enabled Neo-Assyrian kings to forge an imperial order in the Early Iron Age, circa 911–612 B.C.? How did Assyrian kings foster trade and prosperity in their empire?
2. How did Assyrian imperial policies force foes to organize and arm themselves? Why did Assyrian kings from Tiglath-Pileser III to Ashurbanipal II face repeated rebellions? Why did the Babylonians refuse to accept Assyrian rule?

Lecture Twelve

The Persian Empire

Scope: Four imperial orders, which emerged from the Neo-Assyrian Empire, shared rule over the Near East for two generations: Egypt under the Saite Dynasty XXVI, a resurgent Babylon under Chaldean kings, the kings of Lydia in western Asia, and the Medes of western Iran. Between 550 and 525 B.C., these kingdoms fell to the Achaemenid kings of Persia, Cyrus the Great (559–530 B.C.) and Cambyses (530–522 B.C.). Darius I (521–486 B.C.), who seized the throne in a major rebellion, organized the Persian Empire based on Assyrian administration, drawing upon Mesopotamian political and cultural traditions. The Persian Empire was divided into satrapies administered by Persian or Median aristocrats bound by honor and service to the great king. The empire, spanning 3,000 miles from the Aegean shores to the Indus valley, was linked by a royal highway and defended by the first army to depend on cavalry. The Achaemenid kings adroitly adapted local institutions and co-opted native elites to win approval from subject peoples, such as the Hebrews, or admiration from their foes, the Greeks. In 500 B.C., King Darius reigned over a mighty empire, the climax and epitome of 30 centuries, but within the year, he was drawn into wars on his distant western frontiers against the Greeks, who had evolved along quite different lines since the Late Bronze Age. The ensuing Persian Wars altered the course of Western civilization.

Outline

- I. In this lecture, we conclude our study of the great civilizations of the ancient Near East with the Persian Empire.
 - A. We shall use the reign of King Darius the Great (521–486 B.C.) as a stopping point because it represents the climax of developments going back some 30 centuries.
 - B. Darius ruled over a vast empire incorporating all three of the early river-valley civilizations.
 - C. The kings of Persia were regarded as the noblest of all kings of the Near East and are well known to us from Greek historical authors, notably Herodotus (c. 490–425 B.C.).
 - D. We shall have three goals for this lecture: First, we'll look at the Near East in the immediate aftermath of the destruction of the Assyrian Empire in 612 B.C. Then, we'll explore the question of why the Persians emerged in the political order after Assyria as the eventual "winners" in the Near East. Finally, we'll close with some remarks on the impact of these Near Eastern civilizations on the Western tradition.
- II. After the fall of Assyria, four states emerged, including both Egypt and Babylon, which constituted themselves as great imperial orders.
 - A. Dynasty XXVI in Egypt, which came after the fall of Assyria, was founded by an Assyrian rogue governor, Psamtik I (Greek: Psammetichus I; 664–610 B.C.). This dynasty ruled with the cooperation of the Libyan military elite and succeeded in reuniting the Nile valley.
 1. The pharaohs of Dynasty XXVI launched a deliberate archaizing cultural program; that is, they restored ancient temples and shrines and sponsored arts inspired by models from the Old Kingdom. The Greeks entered Egypt under this dynasty in great numbers, arriving as mercenaries and merchants and establishing a commercial colony at Naucratis in the lower Delta.
 2. The pharaohs of Dynasty XXVI were loathe to become involved in the politics of the Near East. They were content to rule their traditional realm, which they did successfully down to 568 B.C. In that year, the dynasty was overthrown by a general named Amasis (568–525 B.C.). Shortly after his death, the Persians invaded and took over the Nile valley. Egypt thus played a relatively limited role in the wider Near East after the fall of Assyria.
 - B. The Neo-Babylonian, or Chaldean, Empire was forged by Nabopolassar and his successors after 627 B.C., when the Chaldeans destroyed the Assyrian Empire.
 1. Nabopolassar and his son, Nebuchadnezzar, campaigned extensively across the Fertile Crescent, reestablishing the old empire of Sargon, from the Red Sea to the Persian Gulf.
 2. Just as their counterparts in Egypt had done, the Neo-Babylonians embarked on an archaizing program, while remaining content to rule over the traditional core areas of Mesopotamian civilization.

3. The Neo-Babylonians are best remembered for the victory of Nebuchadnezzar over the Hebrews of Judah and the deportation of the Jews from Jerusalem to Babylon in 586 B.C.
 4. Nebuchadnezzar is also remembered for the construction of the second of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, the Hanging Gardens of Babylon.
 5. Eventually, the Neo-Babylonian dynasty was also overthrown by Cyrus the Great of Persia. In 539 B.C., Babylon was put under siege and captured by the Persians. Babylon was later revered by the Persian aristocracy as its cultural capital.
- C. The third realm that came out of the old Assyrian Empire was in Asia Minor, the kingdom of the Lydians. The Lydians were a new people who had emerged in western Anatolia at the city of Sardes in the Hermus valley.
1. The Lydian kingdom consolidated Asia Minor by the middle of the 7th century B.C. after a series of migrations disrupted political structures in Anatolia. These were the migrations of the Cimmerians, a nomadic people who had constantly plagued the northern border of the Assyrian Empire.
 2. Just as Egypt and Babylon had done, the Lydian kingdom eventually fell to the Persians. The last king of the Lydian dynasty who ruled at Sardes was Croesus (561–546 B.C.), legendary in the Greek tradition for his wealth and his philhellenism.
- D. Finally, the Medes ruled in northwestern Iran and had their capital at Ecbatana (today Hamadan). The Persians and the Medes were related Iranian peoples, but the Medes took the lead in political organization because they had borne the brunt of Assyrian attacks in the 8th and 7th centuries B.C.
1. Under Cyaxares (653–585 B.C.), the Medes united the various tribes of Iran and fielded effective cavalry armies.
 2. The second king of the Medes, Astyages (585–550 B.C.), proved unpopular with his nobility and was overthrown by his vassal king and kinsman, Cyrus of Persia.
- III. At the time, this political change in Iran was probably considered nothing more than a change of dynasty; however, Cyrus became one of the great conquerors of the Near East and was remembered as a wise king.
- A. In 546 B.C., Cyrus swiftly overthrew the Lydian kingdom and, about five years later, turned on Babylon; thus, he incorporated the Fertile Crescent and Anatolia into his realm. He died fighting the Scythians along his northeastern frontier.
- B. His son, Cambyses (530–522 B.C.), fell heir to Cyrus's project of conquering Egypt. He invaded Egypt in 525 B.C. with the assistance of the Phoenician fleet and took out the Nile valley. The Persians were usually regarded as generous and tolerant conquerors, but this was not the case in Egypt.
- C. Cambyses died under mysterious circumstances in Egypt in 522 B.C., and his death sparked a rebellion across the nascent Persian Empire. Several candidates vied for the throne of the empire, but the one who triumphed was Darius I (521–486 B.C.).
1. Darius reorganized the Persian Empire, drawing upon all the institutions that we have studied in this course.
 2. He created 30 satrapies across the empire, each ruled by a satrap (governor). The satraps were chosen from among Persian noble families who had backed Cyrus in the rebellion of 522–521 B.C. The satraps were responsible directly to the king for the administration of their satrapies and were checked in their powers by royal inspectors, known as the eyes or ears of the king.
 3. The Persian kings also understood the importance of separating the administration of a satrapy from its military and financial arms. Under this system, the empire was well run for 150 years.
 4. Below the imperial administration, the Persians worked through local elites. This policy was the genius of the Persians: They managed to win over the Hebrews; they granted authority to the ancient Lydian aristocracy in Asia Minor; and they worked through the elites of Babylon.
 5. Finally, the Persian kings built a royal road, improving communications across the Near East.
- D. By 500 B.C., the Persian Empire was the mightiest and most civilized organization to emerge in the Near East and was the heir to 30 centuries of remarkable developments.
1. Yet in 499 B.C., Darius and his generals would be drawn into a rebellion by remote Greek subjects on the fringes of the empire. This event brought the Persians, first, into western Asia Minor, then, to Greece and would climax in the great invasion of King Xerxes (486–465 B.C.) in 480–479 B.C.
 2. In that conflict, the king of Persia would ultimately be defeated by an unlikely coalition, the Greek city-states of Athens and Sparta and their allies.

- IV. The civilizations of the Near East laid many of the cultural, intellectual, and institutional foundations of later Greek civilization.
- A. Yet for all of their debt to the Near East, the Greeks represented a different civilization. The Greeks defined themselves by their method of government—they developed the institution of the *polis*, in which they governed themselves with laws passed by the citizens.
 - B. A closing passage from Demosthenes defining the rule of law encapsulates the difference between the Greek civilization to come and the Near Eastern civilizations we have studied.

Further Reading:

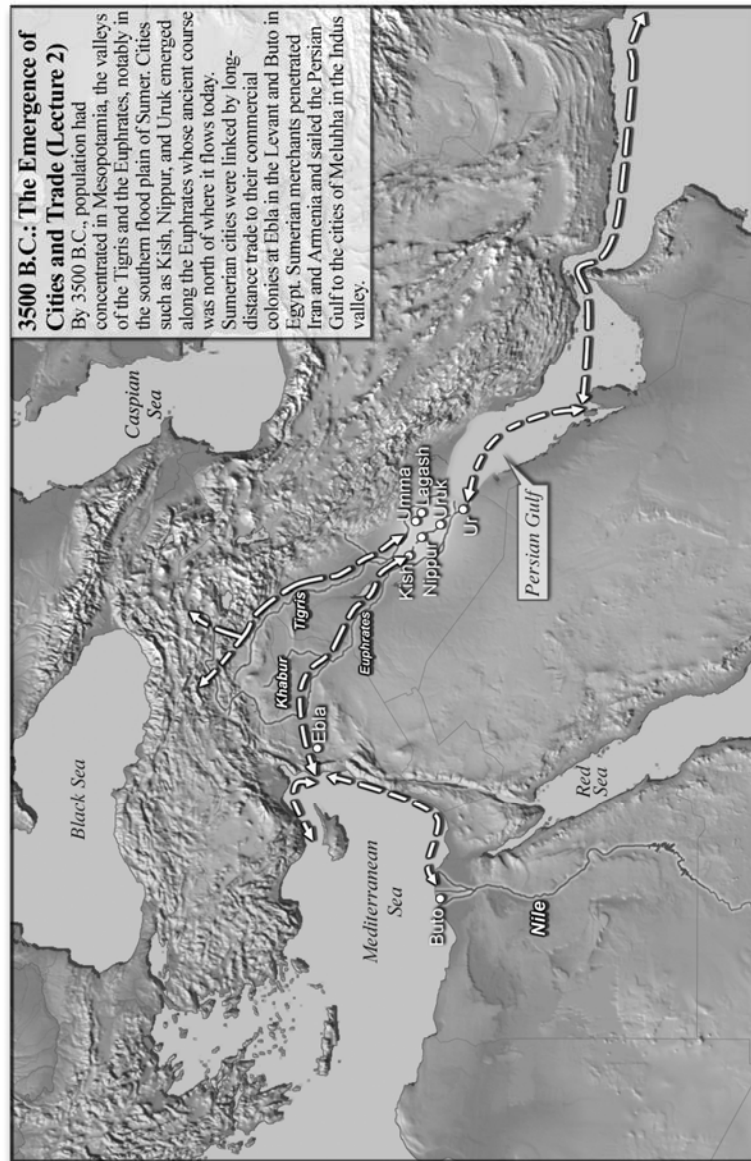
J. M. Cook, *The Persian Empire*.

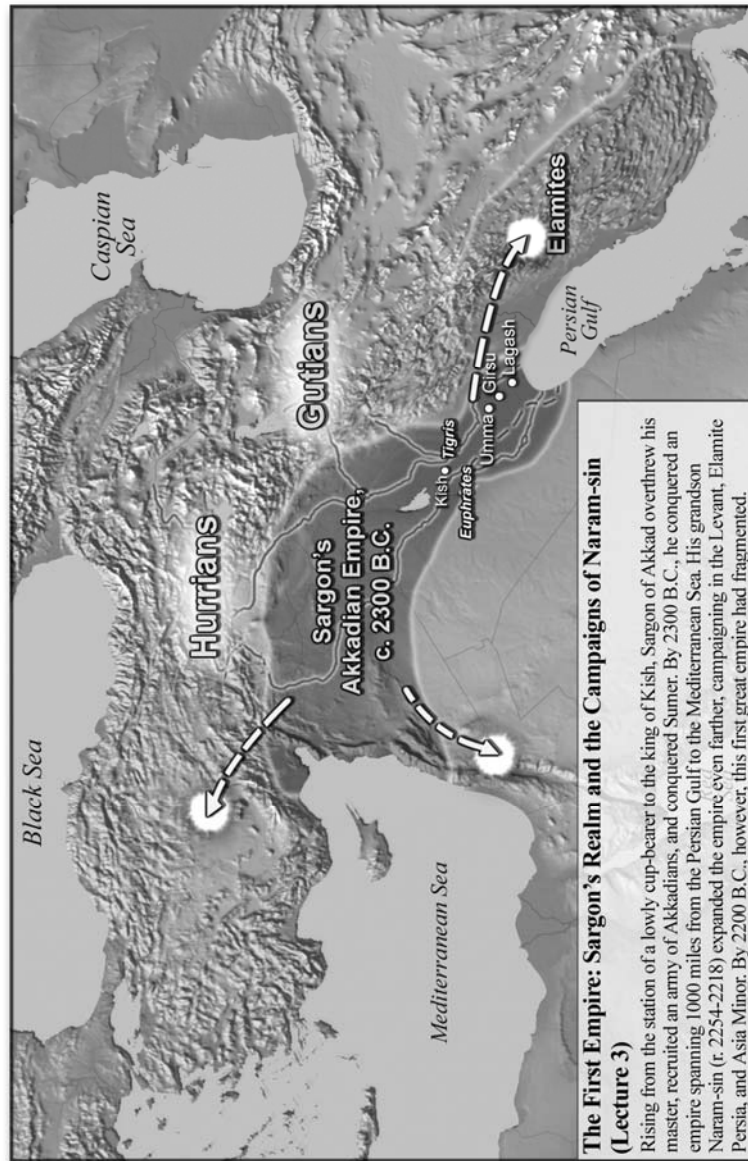
M. A. Dandamaev and V. G. Lukonin, *The Culture and Social Institutions of Ancient Iran*. Translated by P. L. Kohl and D. J. Dadson.

Questions to Consider:

1. What were the strengths and weaknesses of the four kingdoms that succeeded to the Assyrian imperial order?
2. Why did Cyrus the Great conquer the Near East so rapidly? How much did he owe to his military and political genius? How formidable were his foes? Why did Herodotus admire Cyrus and the Persian nobility?

Maps

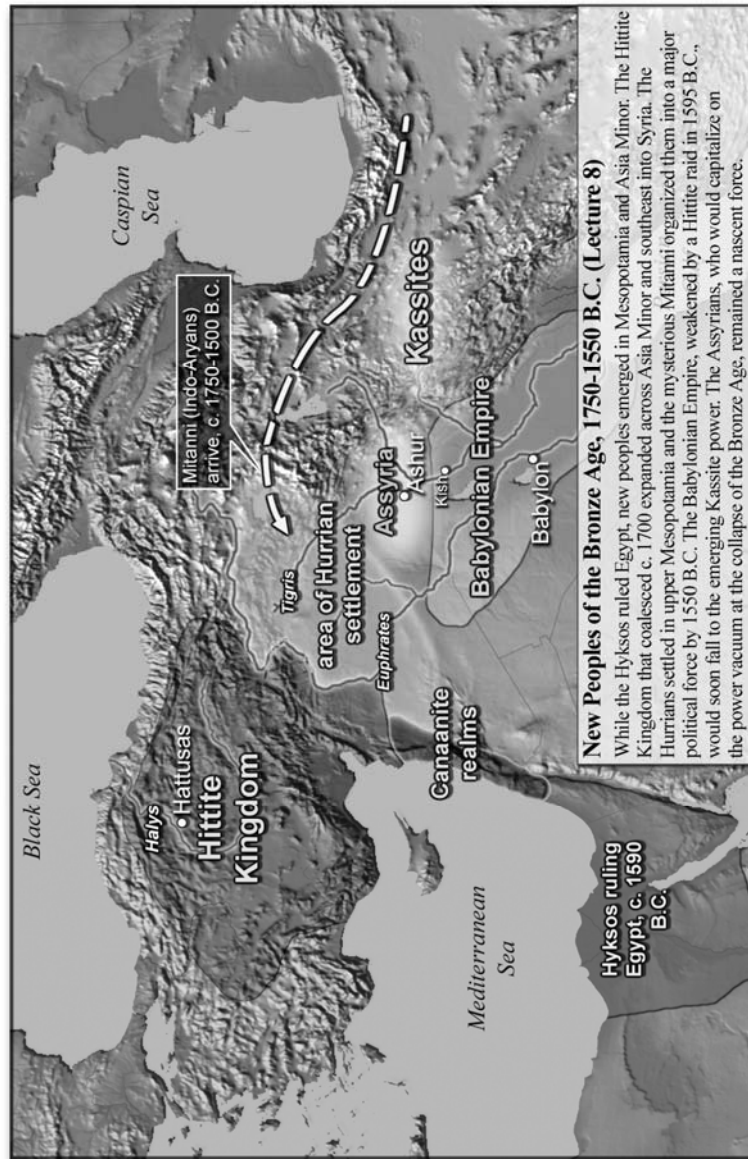


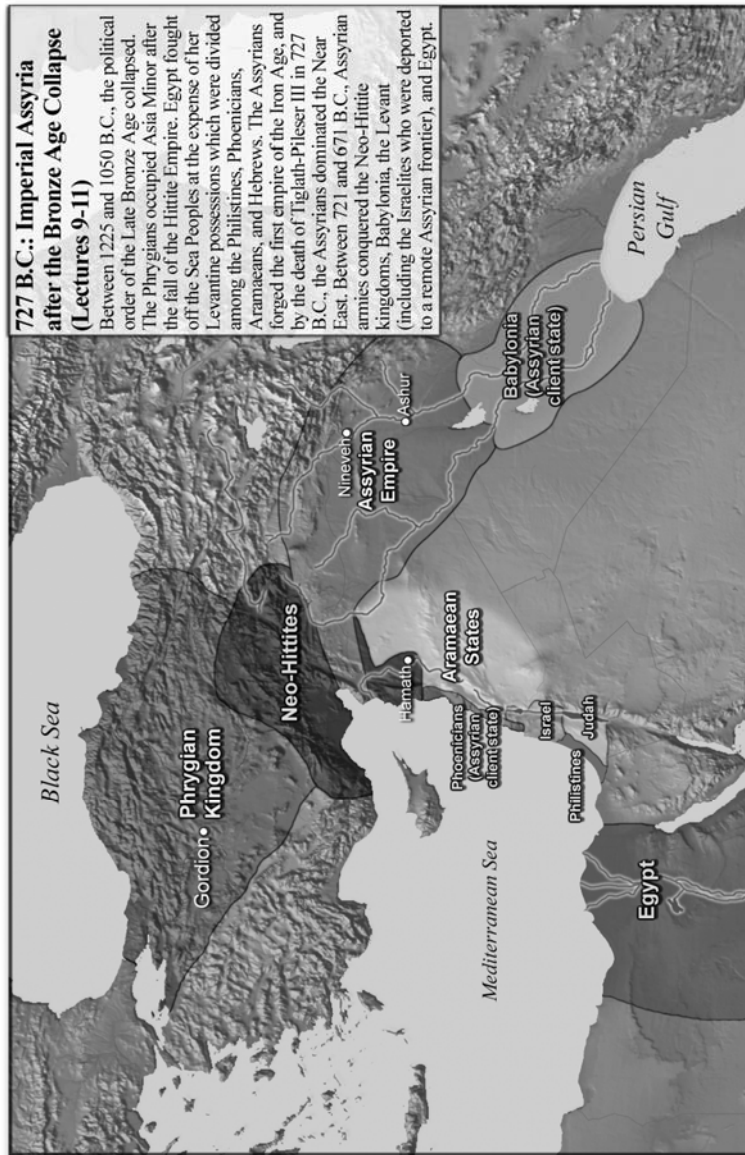


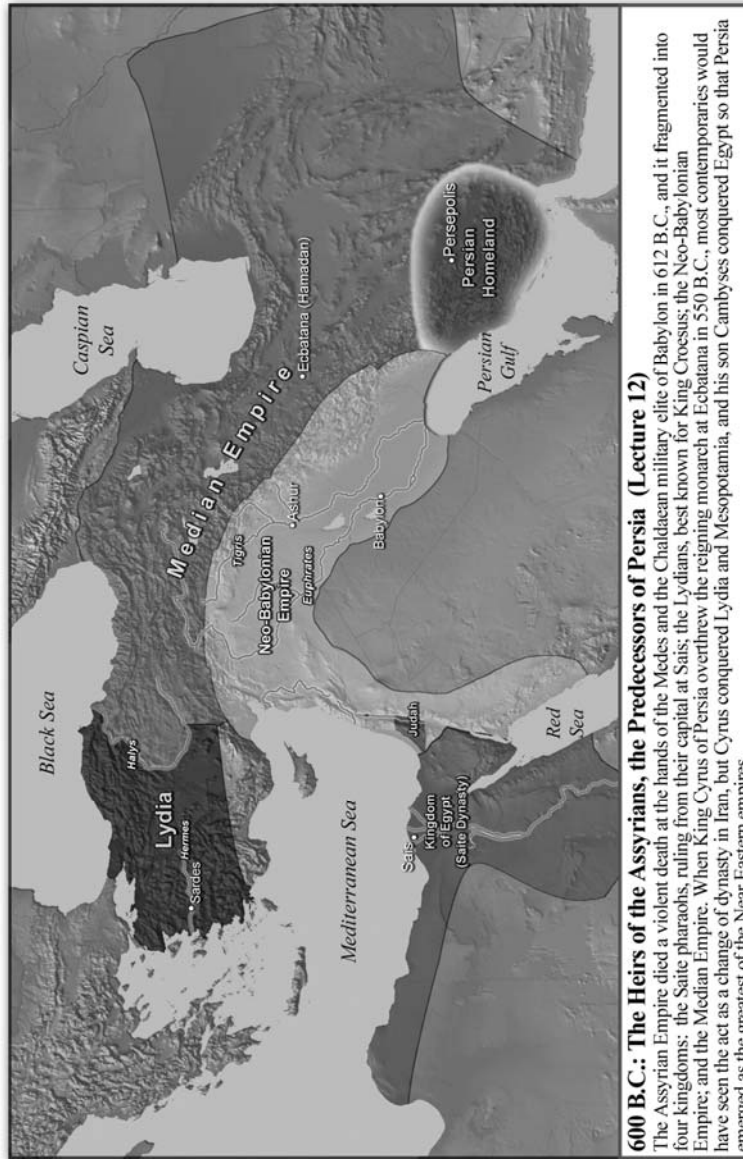
Egyptian Expansion, 2700-1500 B.C.: From the Old to the New Kingdom (Lectures 5-7)

In 3100 B.C., Narmer united Lower Egypt (the Delta north of Memphis) and Upper Egypt (between Memphis and the First Cataract) into a single kingdom. The pharaohs of the Old Kingdom erected the great pyramids. The pharaohs of the Middle Kingdom extended Egyptian power to the Third Cataract. The pharaohs of Dynasty XVIII expelled the Hyksos by 1544 B.C. and forged the New Kingdom, conquering an empire from the Upper Euphrates to Kush in central Sudan.









Timeline

- 11,000–6000 B.C. Incipient agriculture and stock-raising in eastern Asia Minor.
- 7000–5000 B.C. Neolithic Age; emergence of villages at Çatal Hüyük, Jarmo, and Jericho.
- c. 4500–3500 B.C. al-Ubaid Period in Mesopotamia; growth of villages and shift of population to southern Mesopotamia.
- c. 3500–3100 B.C. Emergence of cities and literacy in Sumer (Uruk Period).
Bronze Age (3500–1000 B.C.).
Gerzean culture in the Nile valley: genesis of Egyptian civilization.
- 3100 B.C. Proto-Literate Period (3100–2800 B.C.) in Sumer.
Narmer (Menes), first pharaoh, unifies Lower and Upper Egypt.
Archaic (Early Dynastic) Age of Egypt, Dynasties I–II (3100–2700 B.C.).
Invention of Egyptian hieroglyphics.
- 2800 B.C. Early Dynastic Period (2800–2300 B.C.); warring city-states in Sumer.
- c. 2700–2650 B.C. Gilgamesh, *ensi* of Uruk.
Dynasty III rules in Egypt.
- c. 2650 B.C. Pharaoh Zoser constructs Step Pyramid at Sakkara.
- 2600 B.C. Emergence of the cities of Meluhha (Indus valley, 2600–1700 B.C.)
- c. 2550–2500 B.C. Pharaohs Khafre and Menkaura construct the second and third pyramids at Gizeh; Khafre constructs the Sphinx.
- c. 2450 B.C. Eannatum, *ensi* of Lagash, defeats rival Umma.
- 2334–2279 B.C. Reign of Sargon I: creation of Akkadian Empire.
- 2300–2100 B.C. Migration of Hittite-speaking peoples into Asia Minor.
- 2275–2185 B.C. Reign of Pharaoh Pepi II, Dynasty VI.
First Intermediate Period (c. 2200–2050 B.C.).
- 2254–2218 B.C. Reign of Akkadian emperor Naram-sin.
- 2200–2100 B.C. Collapse of Akkadian Empire.
- 2200–1800 B.C. Migration of Hurrians into northern Mesopotamia and Syria.
- 2112–2095 B.C. Reign of Ur-nammu; creation of the Neo-Sumerian Empire (Ur Dynasty III).
- 2094–2047 B.C. Reign of Shulgi, king of Ur; administrative consolidation.
- 2060–2010 B.C. Pharaoh Mentuhotep II, Dynasty XI, reunifies Egypt from Thebes.
Birth of the Middle Kingdom (Dynasties XI–XV, 2050–1674 B.C.).
- 1991 B.C. Pharaoh Amenemhet I seizes the throne at Thebes.
Foundation of Dynasty XII (1991–1786 B.C.).
- 1934–1924 B.C. Reign of Lipith-Ishtar, Amorite king at Isin, who issues law code.
- 1878–1843 B.C. Reign of Pharaoh Senwoset III; Egyptian conquest of Nubia.
Zenith of Middle Kingdom; flourishing of Egyptian letters and arts.
- 1799–1790 B.C. Reign of Amenemhet IV; decline of Middle Kingdom.
- 1792–1750 B.C. Reign of King Hammurabi; creation of Babylonian Empire.
- 1674–1544 B.C. Hyksos rule over Egypt from Avaris in the Delta.

- 1650–1620 B.C. King Hattušiliš I of the Hittites founds Hattušas as capital.
- 1620–1590 B.C. Reign of Hittite king Mursiliš I; conquests in northern Syria.
- 1595 B.C. King Mursiliš I of the Hittites sacks Babylon.
Decline of Hittite power in Asia Minor (1590–1350 B.C.).
- 1570–1550 B.C. Pharaoh Khamose founds Dynasty XVIII at Thebes.
Foundation of New Kingdom (Dynasties XVIII–XX, 1570–1075 B.C.).
Egyptian resurgence against Hyksos rule.
- c. 1570 B.C. Eruption of volcano of Thera (Santorini).
- 1550–1544 B.C. Reign of Pharaoh Ahmose; expulsion of the Hyksos from Egypt.
- 1544–1520 B.C. Reign of Amenhotep I; first Egyptian attacks into the Levant.
- 1540 B.C. Kassites conquer and rule Babylon (1540–1157 B.C.).
- 1489–1479 B.C. Reign of Queen Hatshepsut; consolidation of Egypt.
- 1482 B.C. At Battle of Megiddo, Prince Thutmose III crushes Canaanite coalition.
- 1479–1426 B.C. Reign of Pharaoh Thutmose III; creation of Egyptian Empire.
- 1400 B.C. Mycenaean Greeks (Achaeans) sack Cnossos and settle Crete.
Mycenaean thalassocracy (1400–1225 B.C.).
- 1365–1330 B.C. Reign of Ashur-uballit I, king of Assyria.
- 1352–1335 B.C. Reign of heretic pharaoh Akhenaton (Amenhotep IV).
- 1344–1322 B.C. Reign of Hittite emperor Šuppiluliumaš I.
- 1335–1325 B.C. Reign of Tutankhamun; restoration of gods and return of court to Thebes.
- 1322–1293 B.C. Pharaoh Horemheb initiates Egyptian military recovery.
- 1321–1295 B.C. Reign of Hittite emperor Mursiliš II.
- 1295–1272 B.C. Reign of Hittite emperor Muwatallis.
- 1293 B.C. Rameses I founds Dynasty XIX (1293–1175 B.C.).
- 1279–1212 B.C. Reign of Pharaoh Rameses II; restoration of Egyptian rule in Asia.
- 1275 B.C. Battle of Kadesh between Rameses II and Muwatallis.
- 1267–1237 B.C. Reign of Hittite emperor Hattušiliš III.
Reform of Hittite cults and construction of sanctuary of Yazilikaya.
- 1257 B.C. Treaty between Pharaoh Rameses II and Emperor Hattušiliš III.
- 1244–1208 B.C. Reign of King Tukulti-Ninurta I of Assyria.
- 1237–1209 B.C. Reign of Hittite emperor Tudhaliyas IV.
- c. 1210 B.C. Israel named in the memorial stele of Pharaoh Merneptah.
- 1209–1190 B.C. Reign of Hittite emperor Šuppiluliumaš II.
Rebellions and civil wars in Hittite Empire.
- 1182–1150 B.C. Attacks of Sea Peoples on Egyptian Delta and Asian provinces.
- 1100–1000 B.C. Perfection and spread of iron technology: Early Iron Age (1100–500 B.C.).
Migration of Phrygians into Asia Minor.
- 1000–800 B.C. Invention of alphabet by Phoenicians.

	Migration of Aramaeans into Syria and Mesopotamia.
950–900 B.C.	Emergence of Phrygian kingdom at Gordion in Asia Minor.
911–891 B.C.	Reign of Adad-nirari II of Assyria. Foundation of the Neo-Assyrian Empire (911–612 B.C.).
884–873 B.C.	Reign of King Omri of Israel.
873–852 B.C.	Reign of King Ahab and Queen Jezebel of Israel.
858–824 B.C.	Reign of King Shalmaneser III of Assyria.
853 B.C.	Battle of Qarqar; setback for Shalmaneser III.
745–727 B.C.	Reign of Tiglath-Pileser III; revival of Assyrian power.
727–698 B.C.	Reign of King Hezekiah of Judah.
724–721 B.C.	Assyrian conquest of Israel; deportation of the Ten Lost Tribes.
721–705 B.C.	Reign of Sargon II; conquest of Neo-Hittite kingdoms.
705–681 B.C.	Reign of Sennacherib; conquest of Babylonia and Elam.
705–680 B.C.	Cimmerian invasion and migrations into Anatolia.
681–669 B.C.	Reign of King Esarhaddon of Assyria.
671–669 B.C.	Assyrian conquest of Egypt.
669–631 B.C.	Reign of Ashurbanipal II, king of Assyria. Construction of the great library at Nineveh.
640–609 B.C.	Reign of King Josiah of Judah; cleansing of the Temple at Jerusalem.
627 B.C.	Nabopolassar rebels from Assyrian rule.
612 B.C.	Babylonians and Medes capture Nineveh; end of the Assyrian Empire.
605–556 B.C.	Reign of King Nebuchadnezzar II of Babylon.
587–586 B.C.	Siege and capture of Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar II.
586–539 B.C.	Babylonian Captivity of the Hebrews.
585–550 B.C.	Reign of Astyages, king of Media.
568–525 B.C.	Reign of Pharaoh Amasis.
561–546 B.C.	Reign of King Croesus of Lydia.
559 B.C.	Accession of Persian king Cyrus (559–530 B.C.).
550 B.C.	Cyrus hailed king of the Medes; unifies Iran.
546 B.C.	Cyrus defeats King Croesus of Lydia; Persian conquest of Asia Minor.
539 B.C.	Cyrus received in Babylon; Persian conquest of the Fertile Crescent. Return of Hebrew deportees to Jerusalem; birth of Judaism.
530 B.C.	Accession of King Cambyses of Persia (530–522 B.C.).
525–522 B.C.	Persian conquest of Egypt.
522–521 B.C.	Great Revolt in the Persian Empire. Accession of King Darius of Persia (521–486 B.C.).
499–494 B.C.	Ionian Revolt; Persians crush bid for independence by Greeks of Asia.

- 490 B.C..... Battle of Marathon; Athenians defeat first Persian invasion.
Birth of Herodotus, father of history (c. 490–425 B.C.).
- 480 B.C..... King Xerxes of Persia invades Greece.
Battles of Thermopylae and Salamis.
- 479 B.C..... Battle of Plataea: defeat of second Persian invasion.

Glossary

Abu Simbel: Nearly 300 miles southwest of modern Aswan in ancient Nubia, a monumental temple complex carved out of living rock by Rameses II (r. 1279–1212 B.C.) to commemorate his victories over the Hittites at Kadesh.

Achaean (Classical Greek: *Akhaioi*): Denotes the Greeks of the Bronze Age; used as a synonym for **Mycenaeans**.

Achaemenid: Descendants of Achaemenes; refers to the royal family of Persia who ruled the Near East in 550–330 B.C.

Agglutinative language: Denotes a language in which the grammatical functions of words are indicated by suffixes and prefixes, rather than internal sound changes in the root words. Sumerian was such a language; thus, in its principles, it is comparable to the family of Ural-Altaic languages of Eurasia.

Akkad: Lies immediately north of Sumer, straddling the middle Tigris and Euphrates valley. The Akkadians were speakers of an East Semitic dialect who adopted the urban, literate civilization of Sumer.

Akkadian Empire (c. 2330–2200 B.C.): The first territorial empire of the Fertile Crescent, forged by Sargon I, king of Akkad.

Alaça Hüyük: Northeast of Hattuşas in central Turkey, this was the seat of a palace in the Early Bronze Age (2600–2300 B.C.) with rich royal graves. It lies northeast of the later Hittite capital. In the Hittite imperial age, Alaça Hüyük was either the sacred city of Arinna or Zippalanda.

al-Jazirah: The grasslands of northwestern Mesopotamia and western Syria; traditional home to pastoralists engaged in stock-raising.

al-Ubaid Period (c. 4500–3500 B.C.): Denotes the period that witnessed the emergence of villages and irrigated farming in Mesopotamia; the name is from a site in southern Iraq.

Amurru (Old Testament: Amorites): The “Western peoples” in Akkadian texts; Semitic-speaking pastoralists who entered lower Mesopotamia in 2000–1800 B.C. and, ultimately, founded Babylon.

Anatolia: “Land of the rising Sun;” denotes the peninsula of Asia Minor or, more specifically, the central plateau that occupies half of the peninsula.

Aramaeans: West Semitic pastoralists who expanded across the Levant and Mesopotamia in c. 1100–900 B.C., promoting the use of the camel. Their language, Aramaic, written in a version of the Phoenician alphabet, displaced Akkadian as the *lingua franca* of the Near East by 500 B.C.

Archaic Period: (1) The Egyptian period of Dynasties I–II (c. 3100–2700 B.C.). (2) The period that witnessed the birth of Greek civilization (750–480 B.C.).

ba: In Egypt, the soul residing in the body placed in the tomb.

Baal: “Lord,” the Canaanite title of address for the tutelary god of a city in the Levant. This god was often represented by an aniconic baetyl, or sacred stone, rather than by a cult statue.

Babylonian Captivity (586–539 B.C.): The period when the Hebrews lived as captives in Mesopotamia. King Nebuchadnezzar II (r. 605–562 B.C.) deported the Hebrew elite after his capture of Babylon; the Persian king Cyrus (r. 559–530 B.C.) permitted the Hebrews to return and to rebuild Jerusalem. The period witnessed the birth of Judaism.

Bible, editorial traditions: Refers to the Pentateuch or Torah of Moses; the first five books of the Bible (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy) were put in final form c. 500–200 B.C. These books reveal four distinct editorial traditions designated by scholars as E (for *Elohim*), the earliest of the editor(s); J (for Jehovah; Latin for Yahweh); P, for the Priestly editor(s) writing after the return from Babylon; and D, the Deuteronomist editor(s). See **Deuteronomist historian**.

Book of the Dead: This Egyptian text of the New Kingdom contained spells and charms to enable the deceased to pass the trials in the underworld administered by the god Thoth. The text was initially carved on the sarcophagus;

from 1550 B.C. on, texts were included in the casket. This tradition can be traced back to the earlier Pyramid Texts (c. 2600–2300 B.C.) and Coffin Texts (c. 2000 B.C.).

Bronze Age (c. 3500–1100 B.C.): Refers to the period when bronze was the most sophisticated metal alloy produced by technology.

Cataract: Refers to the five great falls that break the flow of the Nile valley. Egypt lies north of the first cataract.

Chaldeans: West Semitic pastoralists who settled in Babylonia c. 1100–900 B.C. and became the military elite of Babylon. The Chaldean general Nabopolassar (r. 627–605 B.C.) overthrew Assyrian rule and founded the Chaldean, or Neo-Babylonian, Empire.

Cimmerians: Nomadic horsemen from southern Russia who crossed the Caucasus Mountains in the late 8th century B.C. and invaded Asia Minor and Mesopotamia. The Cimmerians shattered the kingdoms of Urartu and Phrygia and, thus, allowed for the rise of the Lydians as the major power in Asia Minor after 650 B.C.

Cnossos (Greek: Knossos): Near modern Herakleion, this city emerged as the principal palace for the royal family that ruled Minoan Crete in 2100–1400 B.C.

cuneiform: “Wedge shaped;” denotes the writing system devised by the Sumerians in 3500–3100 B.C. and recorded on clay tablets. The writing system was used for a number of languages, including Sumerian, Elamite, Eblaite, Akkadian, Hittite, Hurrian, Mitannian, Urartian, and Old Persian.

Deir el-Bahri: The great mortuary complex of Queen Hatshepsut.

determinatives: Subsidiary marks in cuneiform script that denote the grammatical or syntactical function of a symbol.

Deuteronomist historian: The editor(s) responsible for the narrative books on the histories of Israel and Judah composed in the spirit of Deuteronomy (Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, and 1 and 2 Kings).

dualism: The religious outlook that draws a sharp distinction between views of an evil physical world and a good spiritual world.

Early Dynastic Period (c. 2800–2330 B.C.): Designates the early historical period of warring city-states in Sumer, Akkad, and Elam.

Elam: In southwestern Iran, Elam was home to the Elamites, speakers of an undeciphered language who adopted cuneiform and Sumerian urban civilization.

en: “Overseer”; the Sumerian official who managed the properties and temple of the tutelary god of a city-state.

ensi or ensi-gar: “Lord”; the title of the earliest rulers in Sumer.

Enuma Elish: The Babylonian epic of creation, in which Marduk slays the monster Tiamat and creates the cosmos.

Fayum (classical Lake Moeris): A lake and depression, 80 miles south of Memphis and to the west of the Nile. The region, rich in fowl and fish, witnessed the earliest cultivation of crops in Egypt; pharaohs from the Middle Kingdom on regulated the lake and reclaimed its arable.

First Intermediate Period (c. 2200–2050 B.C.): This period witnessed the collapse of royal authority with the death of Pharaoh Pepi II (r. 2275–2195 B.C.). Mentuhotep II (r. 2060–2010 B.C.) ended this period of disorder by reunifying Egypt and inaugurating the Middle Kingdom.

Gerzean Period (c. 3500–3100 B.C.): This period saw the spread of towns and agriculture and the genesis of the cultural foundations of pharaonic Egypt.

Hattuşas (modern Bogazkale): The political and ritual capital of the Hittites.

henotheism: A religious outlook accepting a single divine power manifested by multiple deities.

hieroglyphics: “Sacred script;” the earliest Egyptian writing system, adapted from pictograms on Naqada II ware (c. 3800–3200 B.C.). The application of these symbols to writing might have been inspired by the example of cuneiform used by Sumerian merchants settled in Buto in the Egyptian Delta.

Hittites: Descendants of Indo-European-speaking peoples who entered Asia Minor c. 2300–2100 B.C.; they unified Asia Minor into the first effective kingdom, then imperial order, in the Middle and Late Bronze Ages.

Hurrians: Speakers of an Asianic language written in cuneiform who settled in northern Syria and Mesopotamia c. 1800–1600 B.C. They acted as cultural middlemen, transmitting Mesopotamian civilization to the Hittites of Asia Minor. They comprised the majority population of the Mitannian kingdom and later Neo-Hittite kingdoms in Syria.

Hyksos: “Foreigners;” Canaanite-speakers who conquered and ruled Egypt as Dynasty XVI (1674–1540 B.C.) from their fortress capital Avaris in the Delta.

ideogram: A symbol representing a concept in writing systems.

inflected language: Refers to a language in which grammatical function is denoted by sound changes within the root word. The Indo-European languages and Hamito-Semitic (or Afro-Asiatic) language families are so classified.

Iron Age: The period of ancient history when iron was the most sophisticated metal (c. 1100 B.C.–500 A.D.). The Early Iron Age (c. 1000–500 B.C.) witnessed the political and cultural reordering of the Near East and Greece.

ka: The twin soul of the body destined for the afterlife in Egyptian religion.

Kadesh (1275 B.C.): The great battle between Pharaoh Rameses II (1279–1212 B.C.) and the Hittite emperor Muwatallis (r. 1295–1272 B.C.). It was a strategic victory for Muwatallis and confirmed Hittite conquests in northern Syria.

karum: A consortium of merchants in Mesopotamia who established commercial settlements throughout the Near East.

Kassites: Indo-European speaking tribes of western Iran who conquered and ruled Babylonia in 1540–1157 B.C.

Knossos: See **Cnossos**.

Kush: Central Sudan between the third and fifth cataracts; the Egyptian designation for a succession of African kingdoms. The Kushites adapted Egyptian material culture and perfected the smelting of iron. Egypt was ruled by Kushite pharaohs in Dynasty XXV (712–656 B.C.).

Levant: The region of Syria, Lebanon, Israel, and Jordan.

lex talionis (Latin: “law of like punishment”): The legal principle for settling criminal disputes in early Mesopotamian law. The aggrieved party had the right to demand equal suffering on the part of the offending party.

Linear A: The syllabary employed in Minoan Crete (c. 1900–1400 B.C.); the language on Linear A tablets is as yet undeciphered.

Linear B: The syllabary adapted from Linear A and employed in Mycenaean Greece (c. 1600–1225 B.C.). Michael Ventris deciphered Linear B, proving that the language was an early form of Greek.

lugal: “Great man;” the title taken by a Sumerian *ensi* who claimed primacy over other city-states in the Early Dynastic Period. With Sargon I, the term designated king.

ma’at: “Justice;” the virtue associated with the Egyptian god Osiris and upheld as the prime virtue of pharaohs from the Middle Kingdom.

mastaba: The royal funerary complexes built in limestone by the pharaohs of Dynasties I–II.

Media: Northwestern Iran; home of the Medes, who organized the first effective Iranian kingdom under Cyaxares (r. 653–585 B.C.) in response to Assyrian aggression.

Megiddo (1482 or 1457 B.C.): The decisive battle and siege by which Thutmose III smashed the Canaanite kings and conquered the Levant. The battle inspired the apocalyptic Armageddon of the Bible.

Meluhha: Sumerian name for the Indus valley civilization (c. 2600–1700 B.C.).

Mesopotamia: “Land between the rivers;” denotes the arable between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers that today is Iraq.

Middle Kingdom (c. 2050–1674 B.C.): Egypt under Dynasties XI–XV.

Minoan: Denotes the civilization of the Bronze Age on Crete (2800–1400 B.C.); the name is derived from the legendary king Minos.

Mitannians: Speakers of an Indo-Aryan language related to Sanskrit. Expert charioteers, they welded the Hurrian and Canaanite cities of northern Mesopotamia and Syria into an effective kingdom c. 1600–1320 B.C.

Mycenaean: Denotes the civilization of the Bronze Age in Greece (1600–1225 B.C.) and, after 1400 B.C., in the Aegean islands and Crete. The name is from Mycenae, the great palace that was the capital of Agamemnon in Greek legend. See **Achaean**.

Narmer palette: A ceremonial stone emblem that depicts Narmer's conquest of Lower Egypt c. 3100 B.C.

Neolithic Age (c. 7000–5000 B.C.): "New Stone Age;" this period witnessed the domestication of plants and animals and the shift to settled life in villages in the Near East.

New Kingdom (1550–1075 B.C.): Denotes the imperial age of Egypt under Dynasties XVIII–XX.

nomarch: The district magistrate of a *nome*, who ruled by hereditary right until the reforms of the Middle Kingdom.

nome: One of the 30 districts of Egypt.

Old Kingdom (c. 2700–2200 B.C.): This period witnessed the flowering of Egyptian civilization under Dynasties III–VI; often designated the Pyramid Age.

Persian Empire (550–330 B.C.): The last great Near Eastern empire, founded by Cyrus the Great (559–530 B.C.) and conquered by Alexander the Great (336–323 B.C.). See **Achaemenid**.

Pharaoh: Egyptian *per-aa*, meaning "great house;" the title of respect to the Egyptian monarch. The term came into general use in the New Kingdom.

Philistines: Refugees from Crete who were among the Sea Peoples who attacked Egypt in the Late Bronze Age. They settled the Levantine shore from Akko (Acre) to Gaza c. 1100–1000 B.C. and clashed with the Hebrews.

phonogram: A symbol representing a sound in a writing system.

Phrygians: Indo-European speakers who migrated from the Balkans into central Asia Minor after the collapse of the Hittite Empire c. 1100–900 B.C. The Phrygians, from their capital Gordion, founded the first Anatolian kingdom of the Early Iron Age.

pictogram: A symbol representing an object as a picture in a writing system.

Proto-Literate Period (c. 3100–2800 B.C.): This period witnessed the spread of literacy and urban civilization in Sumer, Akkad, and Elam.

Punt: The Egyptian designation for Somalia. Queen Hatshepsut (r. 1489–1479 B.C.) sent a celebrated trade mission to Punt.

Qarqar (853 B.C.): A strategic victory by a coalition of Neo-Hittite, Aramaean, and Hebrew kings against the Assyrian king Shalmaneser III. The victory checked Assyrian expansion in the Levant for 75 years.

satrapy: One of the 30 provinces of the Persian Empire as organized by Darius I (521–486 B.C.). Ruled by a Persian or Median governor called a *satrap*.

Sea Peoples: Coalitions of invaders from the Aegean world and Libya who attacked the Egyptian Delta and the Levant with great fleets in 1182–1150 B.C. Sundry Sea Peoples were later settled as allies and mercenaries in the Levant by the pharaohs of Dynasties XX and XXI. See also **Philistines**.

Second Intermediate Period: The period of Hyksos rule in Egypt; see **Hyksos**.

Shatt el-Arab: The modern delta of southern Iraq, which in antiquity, was part of the Persian Gulf.

syllabary: A writing system designating syllables rather than basic sounds of an alphabet.

syncretism: "Mixing with;" the religious outlook of identifying gods of one locale with their counterparts in another locale. Hence, in Egypt, the Sun god Ra of Lower Egypt was identified with Amon of Thebes in Upper Egypt.

talent: “Balance;” a Mesopotamian weight of a large sum subdivided into 60 *minae* and 3,000 shekels. The Assyrian kings promoted reckoning in the Near East by demanding tribute in silver paid by the talent.

talatat: Arabic for a fragment of smashed reliefs and inscriptions of the shrine of Aton constructed by Akhenaton (r. 1352–1335 B.C.). The thousands of fragments were reassembled and translated by Donald Redford, who reassessed the pharaoh’s religious reforms.

Tel el-Amarna: The modern village near Akhetaton, ritual capital of Akhenaton, 300 miles north of Thebes. The administrative documents uncovered at the site are known as the *Amarna letters*; the naturalistic visual arts of the period are known as the *Amarna style*.

Ten Lost Tribes: Members of the upper classes and craftsmen of Israel who were deported by the Assyrians in 724–721 B.C. These Hebrews were assimilated into the Assyrian population. See also **Samaritans**.

thalassocracy: “Sea power;” term coined by the Athenian Thucydides (c. 465–400 B.C.) to designate the leading naval power in the Aegean.

Third Intermediate Period (1075–715 B.C.): This period witnessed the loss of Asian provinces and the rule of Egypt by the Libyan kings of Dynasties XXII–XXIV (945–715 B.C.).

Urartu (biblical Ararat): Centering around Lake Van, this city was the cultural basis for classical Armenia. The kings of Tuspha (Van) turned Urartu into a rival of the Neo-Assyrian Empire (911–612 B.C.). Urartian was an Asianic language, perhaps related to Hurrian, written in cuneiform.

Uruk Period (c. 3500–3100 B.C.): This period witnessed the emergence of true cities and literacy in Sumer.

wanax: “Lord;” the Achaeans or Mycenaean title for king, c. 1600–1225 B.C.

waret (Greek: *epistrategos*): Royal administrator placed over one of the three districts of Egypt as reorganized by the pharaohs of Dynasty XII in the Middle Kingdom.

Yazilikaya (Turkish: “carved rock”): One mile northeast of Hattušas was an open-air Hittite royal sanctuary carved out of living rock. The reliefs have been linked to religious reforms sponsored by King Hattušiliš III (r. 1267–1237 B.C.) and Queen Puduhepa.

ziggurat: A multi-story Mesopotamian temple constructed of mud brick. In Genesis, the ziggurat was recalled as the Tower of Babel, “a gateway to Heaven.”

Biographical Notes

Adad-nirari II (r. 911–891 B.C.): King of Assyria; founded a new line of Neo-Assyrian kings who forged the first imperial order in the Near East during the Iron Age.

Ahab (r. 873–852 B.C.): Omrid king of Israel; the first biblical figure named in contemporary Near Eastern records; a participant at the Battle of Qarqar and named in the stele of Mesha. He and his Tyrian queen, Jezebel, were remembered as idolaters. They were overthrown in a coup by the general Jehu.

Ahmose (r. 1550–1544 B.C.): The second pharaoh of Dynasty XVIII; he expelled the Hyksos from the Delta and imposed his rule throughout Egypt.

Akhenaton (r. 1352–1335 B.C.): Pharaoh of Dynasty XVIII, who succeeded with the dynastic name Amenhotep IV. In the sixth year of his reign, he changed his name to Akhenaton and proclaimed the monotheistic solar cult of Aton as the only religion in Egypt. His religious reforms plunged Egypt into civil war and enabled the Hittites to overrun northern Syria.

Amasis (r. 568–525 B.C.): Pharaoh of Egypt and the commander of the Greek mercenaries who seized power and overthrew the legitimate Dynasty XXVI. He died on the eve of the Persian invasion of Egypt.

Amenemhet I (Greek: Ammenemes; r. 1991–1962 B.C.): Founded Dynasty XII and initiated the recovery of royal power in Egypt.

Amenhotep III (r. 1391–1352): “The Magnificent,” ruled the Egyptian Empire at its zenith under Dynasty XVIII. He favored the solar cult of Ra and moved to break the power of the great families at Thebes.

Ashurbanipal II (r. 669–631 B.C.): The last great Assyrian king, he built the great library of Nineveh and patronized arts and letters.

Ashur-uballit I (r. 1365–1330 B.C.): King of Assyria; asserted Assyrian independence in the wake of the defeat of the Mitannians by the Hittite king Šuppiluliumaš.

Astyges (r. 585–550 B.C.): King of Media, he alienated the ruling elite and was overthrown by his nephew Cyrus, king of the Persians.

Cambyes (r. 530–522 B.C.): Great king of Persia and son of Cyrus; he invaded and conquered Egypt. His accidental death sparked the Great Rebellion of 522–521 B.C.

Croesus (r. 561–546 B.C.): Philhellene king of Lydia noted for his wealth; he blundered into a war with King Cyrus of Persia that resulted in his defeat and the conquest of his kingdom by Cyrus.

Cyaxares (r. 653–585 B.C.): King of Media; he organized the Medes into the first effective cavalry army in history and allied with Nabopolassar of Babylon to destroy Assyrian power.

Cyrus (r. 559–530 B.C.): “The Great,” he ascended the Persian throne as a Median vassal, but in 550 B.C., he conquered Media and was proclaimed Great King. He conquered Lydia in 546 B.C. and Babylonia in 539 B.C., founding the greatest empire of the ancient Near East.

Darius (r. 521–486 B.C.): Great king of Persia and scion of the Achaemenid family, Darius was proclaimed king during the Great Revolt of 522–521 B.C. He restored order and reorganized the administration of the empire.

Eannatum (c. 2450 B.C.): *Ensi* of Lagash who recorded his victory over the rival city Umma in the memorial Stele of Vultures.

Entemena (c. 2400 B.C.): *Ensi* of Lagash and nephew and successor of Eannatum; he humbled the power of Umma.

Esarhaddon (r. 681–669 B.C.): King of Assyria; he restored Babylon and waged tough frontier wars in Asia Minor against the Cimmerians. In 671–669 B.C., he invaded and conquered Egypt.

Gilgamesh (Sumerian: Bilgames; c. 2700–2650 B.C.): *Ensi* of Uruk who inspired Sumerian and, later, Akkadian poets to celebrate his legendary combats and his quest for immortality.

Hammurabi (r. 1792–1750 B.C.): King of Babylon; he reunited Mesopotamia into the third territorial empire of the Bronze Age. Hammurabi, by issuing his law code and funding literary activities, made Akkadian the *lingua franca* of the Near East and transformed Babylon into its cultural and economic center.

Hatshepsut (r. 1489–1479 B.C.): The first Egyptian queen to rule in her own right as pharaoh. She was the daughter of Thutmose II (r. 1500–1489 B.C.), but she shared power with her consort and half-brother, Thutmose III. She halted imperial expansion and sought legitimacy by sponsoring building programs and cultural activities.

Hattušiliš I (r. 1650–1620 B.C.): Hittite king who consolidated control over the Hatti, founded Hattušas as his capital, and brought the petty dynasts of eastern Anatolia under his control.

Hattušiliš III (r. 1267–1237 B.C.): Hittite king who concluded a treaty with Rameses II in 1257 B.C. that confirmed Hittite rule in northern Syria. He and his queen, Puduhepa, initiated religious reforms and erected the reliefs of the open-air sanctuary at Yazilikaya.

Herodotus (c. 490–425 B.C.): “Father of history” and citizen of Halicarnassus, Herodotus wrote the first history, dealing with the clash between the Greeks and the Persians. His account contains a wealth of information on Asia Minor, Egypt, Babylonia, and Persia in the 6th and 5th centuries B.C.

Hezekiah (r. 727–698 B.C.): King of Judah; he is remembered as a righteous king who cleansed the Temple of Jerusalem of idolatry, smashing the brazen serpent. In 701 B.C., he was forced to purchase immunity and submit to Assyrian overlordship when Sennacherib besieged Jerusalem.

Horemheb (r. 1322–1293): Pharaoh of Egypt; served as commander of the chariots under Tutankhamun. He seized the throne, overthrowing Ay and marrying Princess Mutnedjmet; restored the worship of the old gods; and systematically destroyed the shrines of Aton.

Josiah (r. 640–609 B.C.): King of Judah; hailed as the righteous king responsible for discovering Deuteronomy. He reformed the worship of Yahweh and ended worship of the Canaanite gods on the high places. He asserted Judaeans independence with the collapse of the Assyrian Empire, but he was executed on orders of Pharaoh Necho II.

Khafre (Greek: Chephren; c. 2550–2525 B.C.): Pharaoh of Dynasty IV and successor of his brother, Khufu; he built the Sphinx and the second great pyramid at Gizeh.

Khamose (r. 1570–1550 B.C.): Prince of Thebes; he founded Dynasty XVIII, drove the Hyksos out of the Nile valley, and restored Egyptian military and political power.

Khufu (Greek: Cheops; c. 2600–2550 B.C.): Pharaoh of Dynasty IV and son of Snefru; he built the first and greatest of the pyramids at Gizeh.

Lipith-Ishtar (r. 1934–1924 B.C.): Amorite king of Isin; issued a law code in Sumerian, the second known code from Mesopotamia.

Manetho: Egyptian priest of Sebennytos; he wrote in Greek an account of Egyptian history in c. 280 B.C. and arranged the pharaohs into a scheme of dynasties.

Menkaura (Greek: Mycerinus; c. 2525–2480 B.C.): Pharaoh of Dynasty IV; he built the third and last of the great pyramids at Gizeh.

Mentuhotep II (r. 2060–2010 B.C.): Pharaoh of Dynasty XI; he ended civil wars and reunited Egypt, ushering in the Middle Kingdom. He made Thebes his capital and upheld Amon as the protector of the dynasty.

Mentuhotep III (r. 2009–1998 B.C.): Last pharaoh of Dynasty XI and an active builder; he was overthrown by his minister Amenemhet, founder of Dynasty XII.

Merneptah (r. 1212–1200): Pharaoh of Dynasty XIX; he restored Egyptian rule in southern Syria and Palestine, and his memorial stele mentions Israel as a subject nation in Asia.

Mursiliš I (r. 1620–1590 B.C.): Hittite king; conquered northern Syria and sacked Babylon in 1595 B.C. His murder led to a succession of civil wars in Asia Minor.

Mursiliš II (r. 1321–1295 B.C.): Hittite king and son of Šuppiluliumaš I; he extended Hittite hegemony over western Asia Minor, crushing the rival Luwian state Arzawa.

Muwatallis (r. 1295–1272 B.C.): Hittite king and brother of Mursiliš II; he fought Pharaoh Rameses II at Kadesh in 1275 and consolidated Hittite rule in Syria.

Nabopolassar (r. 627–605 B.C.): King of Babylon; a Chaldaean mercenary commander who rebelled against the Assyrians. In alliance with the Median king Cyaxares, he captured Nineveh and founded the Neo-Babylonian Empire.

Naram-sin (r. 2254–2218 B.C.): Akkadian emperor and grandson of Sargon I, he campaigned deep into Anatolia and northwestern Iran. He probably sacked the city of Ebla in Syria, and he pursued a generous policy of patronizing Sumerian shrines.

Narmer (Greek: Menes; c. 3100 B.C.): Prince of Upper Egypt; he united Egypt and ruled as the first pharaoh.

Nebuchadnezzar II (r. 605–556 B.C.): Chaldaean king of Babylon; he conquered the Levant and, in 587–586 B.C., captured and sacked Jerusalem, ending the Davidic dynasty and deporting the Hebrews. His reign is the setting for the biblical book of Daniel.

Omri (r. 884–873 B.C.): King of Israel; a mercenary captain who seized the throne of Israel in the aftermath of the end of the Davidic line. Omri and his heirs transformed Israel into an urban, bureaucratic kingdom, and he was remembered as a devotee of Yahweh.

Pepi II (r. 2275–2195 B.C.): The last pharaoh of Dynasty VI, he ruled ineffectively over Egypt as *nomarchs* asserted their regional authority.

Psamtik I (Greek: Psammetichus; r. 664–610 B.C.): Was appointed as Assyrian client king of Egypt, but he soon declared independence and founded Dynasty XXVI, ruling from the capital Sais in the Delta. Psamtik was the first pharaoh to employ large numbers of Greek mercenaries.

Rameses I (r. 1293–1291 B.C.): Pharaoh of Egypt; the minister of Horemheb, he succeeded legally and founded Dynasty XIX.

Rameses II (r. 1279–1212 B.C.): Pharaoh of Dynasty XIX, he fought the Hittites at the Battle of Kadesh in 1275 B.C., but in 1257 B.C., he agreed to a partition of Syria. He built the great temple of Abu Simbel in Nubia to celebrate his victories and restored Egyptian prestige and revenues.

Sargon I (2334–2279 B.C.): Sargon I seized the throne of Agade and united the Akkadians into a kingdom. He conquered Sumer and Elam and imposed his hegemony over northern Iraq and Syria, forging the first territorial empire in Mesopotamia.

Sargon II (721–705 B.C.): King of Assyria, he was likely a usurper who overthrew the legitimate monarch, Shalmaneser V. He took the throne name Sargon to assert his legitimacy and waged ruthless frontier wars against the Neo-Hittites and Urartu. He was slain in a frontier clash with the Cimmerians. Sargon II built a new palace and capital at Dur Sharrukin (modern Khorsabad).

Sennacherib (r. 705–681 B.C.): King of Assyria and son of Sargon II, he constructed the great palace at Nineveh. He ruthlessly put down two Babylonian rebellions, in 703–700 and 694–689 B.C. He sacked, destroyed, and cursed Babylon, removing the cult statues to Nineveh. In 701 B.C., he led an abortive invasion against Egypt, but he imposed his hegemony over the Aramaean princes and King Hezekiah of Judah.

Senwoset III (Greek: Sesostris; r. 1878–1843 B.C.): The greatest pharaoh of Dynasty XII; he extended Egyptian power into Nubia, reformed royal administration, and initiated the reclamation of the arable of the Fayum.

Shalmaneser III (r. 858–824 B.C.): King of Assyria; he campaigned against Babylon and the Neo-Hittite kingdoms, but Assyrian western expansion was checked by the Battle of Qarqar in 853 B.C.

Shulgi (r. 2094–2047 B.C.): King of Ur; he succeeded his father, Ur-nammu, as ruler of the Neo-Sumerian Empire. He created the royal chancery, patronized the shrines, and presided over the flowering of Sumerian letters.

Snefru or Sneferu (Greek: Soris; c. 2610–2600 B.C.): First pharaoh of Dynasty IV; built the first true pyramids at Dahshur, the so-called Bent and Red Pyramids.

Šuppiluliumaš I (r. 1344–1322 B.C.): Hittite king who humbled the Mitannian kingdom and exploited Egyptian weakness under Akhenaton to conquer northern Syria. He also forged the imperial bureaucracy and provincial administration.

Šuppiluliumaš II (r. 1209–1190 B.C.): Hittite king and second son of Hattušiliš III and Pudahepa; he completed the relief programs at Yazılıkaya. The Hittite Empire fragmented soon after his death.

Thutmose III (r. 1479–1426 B.C.): The greatest pharaoh of Dynasty XVIII, hailed as the “Napoleon of the Ancient Near East;” Thutmose III initiated Egyptian expansion into the Levant in the final years of his aging consort, Hatshepsut. His victory at Megiddo (1482 or 1457 B.C.) resulted in the advance of Egyptian arms to the upper Euphrates.

Tiglath-Pileser III (r. 745–727 B.C.): King of Assyria; originally the commander Pul, who seized the throne in a coup. Tiglath-Pileser reorganized the Assyrian army and administration and, thus, initiated a second period of imperial expansion.

Tudhaliyas IV (r. 1237–1209 B.C.): Hittite king and son of Hattušiliš III, he sponsored religious reforms intended to create a sacral monarchy.

Tukulti-Ninurta I (r. 1244–1208 B.C.): King of Assyria; he threatened Hittite frontiers and briefly conquered and ruled Babylon. He is remembered as a ferocious warrior and may have been the inspiration for Nimrod in Genesis.

Tutankhamun (r. 1335–1325 B.C.): Pharaoh of Dynasty XVIII; surmised to be the son of Akhenaton. He succeeded as a boy of 10 and, thus, was guided by his ministers to restore the old gods. He is celebrated for the fact that his tomb was excavated intact by Howard Carter in 1922.

Ur-nammu (r. 2112–2095 B.C.): King of the Third Dynasty of Ur, he cleared Sumer of barbarian invaders and forged the Neo-Sumerian Empire. He issued the first known law code in Mesopotamia.

Utnaphistim: “I who found life;” the pious mortal of Shuruppak, rescued from the deluge by the god Ea in the Babylonian Epic of Gilgamesh. He and his wife dwelled in blessed Dilmun, where he was visited by Gilgamesh about the secret of immortality. See **Ziusudra**.

Xerxes (r. 486–465 B.C.): Son of Darius I and Atossa, daughter of Cyrus, Xerxes succeeded as Great King of Persia after the death of his father. In 480 B.C., he led the invasion of Greece, and the defeats sustained in 480–479 B.C. put Persian power in jeopardy.

Ziusudra: The Sumerian Noah who built an ark to escape the flood sent by the gods to destroy mankind. He appears in a fragmentary Akkadian epic of 1600 B.C. under the name Atrahasis, “Surpassing in Wisdom.”

Zoser of Djoser (c. 2700 B.C.): Pharaoh of Dynasty III; he commissioned his architect, Imhotep, to design the first pyramid, the so-called Step Pyramid, at Sakkara.

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